

A
Vindication of the FACTS

IN THE
FREE ENQUIRER'S LETTER,

AND THE
Misrepresentations in the Reply
thereto considered.

Addressed to the AUTHOR of the REPLY.

ALSO, AN
EXAMINATION
OF THE
Disguised Quaker's DREAM;

IN WHICH

His CRITICISMS are detected; and his Reasoning
in Favour of *Human Systems*, to the Discredit of the
Authority and Use of *Divine Revelation*, exposed.

By A. M. Author of a *View of the Trinity in the Glafs of*
Divine Revelation, &c.

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TO THE R E A D E R.

*I Humbly conceive, that the occasion of so many different and dishonourable opinions concerning the LORD JESUS, is the want of due attention to the scope of the Divine Oracles, in which HE is the leading subject. Hence some violently contend, out of pretended zeal to the honour of CHRIST, that the relative names He bears, are proper and peculiar properties of his person, as he is God abstractedly; and that such are as natural and necessary to him as to be God. These persons do not remember how little countenance the scriptures give to such an opinion, nor what improvement the enemies of CHRIST's Deity and Self-existent glories make upon such concessions, as thus at once deliver into their hands the whole cause.—And as the Arian gains advantage on the one hand, the Socinian triumphs on the other, while they see the pretended orthodox stripping the LORD JESUS of the titles and names he bears as EMMANUEL, the Sent of God, and Saviour of sinners, to support a scheme which never was revealed by God to men, viz. How the three Divine persons subsist in the Divine nature, or God-head, while the terms they use are for ever incompatible with Deity abstractedly considered.**

I am also afraid, that thro' the same inattention to Divine revelation, there are many who consider the LORD JESUS in no other view than that of a Saviour, as the Father's servant, fulfilling the work he had given him to do. But the contemplation of what is revealed of him, will lead us to something of a higher consideration concerning the LORD JESUS, than merely that of his being a SAVIOUR: For tho' considered purely in his relation to sinners, as clothed with his saving office in its several branches, he is worthy of our grateful acknowledgments, and most ardent gratitude: Yet the consideration of his saving office, will lead us up to the transcendent dignity of his glorious PERSON, by which he was able to procure and confer so great salvation. In his Person we contemplate the mysterious constitution of it, as the God-man, the incomparable EMMANUEL; in him, as such, created and uncreated glories shine; he is the product of eternal council and prudence; the glass of Divine perfections; the object of the Divine, immense complacency and delight; the final cause of the glorified creation; yea, of that

* This is evident from the method a modern author takes to confute the Arian hypothesis, which objects against the consistency of such terms with self-existence: he sees it impossible to reconcile them, and therefore daringly (I had almost said blasphemously) endeavours to prove, that the Divine person of the Father is ONLY SELF-EXISTENT.—Astonishing! that men to support their darling notion of the LORD JESUS being a son as he is GOD, or that his Divine person was begotten, which they can never prove from revelation, should thus give up his Divine and self-existent glories into the hands of adversaries to this important truth! Tell it not in the churches, lest blaspheming Arians rejoice!

that saving office, with which he is vested.—In such predominant regards, he receives the zealous adoration and applause of (those that are least related to him as a Saviour) the august arch-angelical spirits that surround the throne. In this respect the united assemblies of angels and redeemed, eternally behold and admire the face of the DIVINE EM-MANUEL, the glorious, well-beloved, and only begotten Son of GOD, in whom shines all the perfections of Deity; yea, in him “dwells “all the fullness of the God-head bodily.”

BUT as this is not the subject I intend to pursue in the following pages, any who inclines to see it more fully discussed may peruse what I formerly published,† which I thought sufficient to answer Mr Nimmo's Reply, without taking notice of the author; and also to shew how false these reports were which have been industriously circulated to my prejudice. But after keeping them from the press several months, I found that not only what respects my principles required regard, but the matters of fact also. Which, upon the bare authority of the author, have (much to my disadvantage) passed for truths with the obsequious multitude, as if the clerical character endued persons with that virtue, which the poets feign of a Lydian king, of turning all things by their touch, not into gold, but into truth, which is more precious.—It became therefore necessary, either to shew the weakness of alledging such things against me and others by a direct Reply; or lie under the reproach of being guilty wherein we knew ourselves innocent. And how little ground the author had to charge us with many things, will be found from the short remarks following.

BUT notwithstanding so many gross misrepresentations as appear in the Reply, I could not be prevailed upon (for the author's sake) directly to detect them, had not another performance appeared, which is so contrived as to homologate the Replier's relation of facts;—defame us;—and strike at the foundation of christianity, by a subtle endeavour to supplant the authority and use of revelation, in favour of systems composed by men. And tho' not directly written against me; yet as the gentleman it is intended to reproach, was innocently, without any cause on his part, involved, and as the stroke of calumny, aimed at him, is for our sake, it is no more than gratitude, and in effect self-defence, to endeavour to ward it off. Tho' the contemptibleness of that performance, so far as it concerns him, makes it unworthy of his notice; yet, as its specious reasoning to the dishonour of the sacred oracles may ensnare the inattentive, I have added a few remarks upon it, which I acknowledge are far short of the manner it deserves to be exposed: As all such subtle attacks upon the credit of revelation, merit only the utmost scorn and contempt of every christian, who has a regard to the truth as revealed in the word of God.

† A pamphlet, intituled *A View of the Trinity in the Glass of Divine Revelation: With some Reflections on human Explications concerning that Subject. And a defence of private judgment in Opposition to blind Obedience, in three Dissertations.* Price 1s.

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VINDICATION, &c.

REV. SIR,

WE were pleased to find your first sentiments so favourable concerning the letter to you and your session, as that you were no ways apprehensive that either religion or your character could suffer by it. We wish you had either kept in the same opinion, or given us no reason to judge otherways concerning your reply; which, we must be so free as to say, is not much to the credit of either religion, or any person's character concerned in it.

As whatever relates to the doctrines of religion in your's is fully answered in the dissertations: What follows, is intended only as short remarks on some matters of fact, wherein we differ widely from you in the account you give in your *true reply*. And indeed, Sir, we for your sake blush to write freely, what we certainly know; yet the truth, and our own characters, will not allow us to be altogether silent.

THESE several charges we lay against your reply, (1.) It is far from answering the character the author has assumed, *the true replier*; there being several falshoods therein. (2.) There are many things misrepresented. (3.) Many remarks foreign to the point, merely to amuse the inconsiderate reader, and throw a gloom upon our conduct or principles. (4.) Several very indecent remarks not only upon us, but some others no ways interested in the affair. We shall only mention a few of these things there are no foundation for in truth. Page 2d, That the affair (*viz.* our heresy, as you call it) was published by us, long before your public declaration complained of.—That it was before others beside your Rev. brother, that two of us vented and defended it in your own house.—That it was not known that any of us entertained these principles 'till after the middle of summer 1765.—Page 3d, That you mentioned that text, *John ii. 23.* or any other in your declaration.—That all you cite from Mr *Erskine* in the Reply, (or the third part of it) or any of the

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the texts you include there, were mentioned in your public declaration.—Page 5th, That we impugn these truths the Martyrs sealed with their blood, and avouch these principles they bore a testimony against.—That we took brow-beating, insolent, and overbearing measures with you.—Page 6th, That we brought forth the old exploded arguments of *Socinians* to support our cause.—That it was upon the point of difference that we by a letter craved a conversation with you.—That you sent for one of *us* to your house, *who* brought another along with him: And that you conversed *some hours* with *us* on that occasion.—Page 7th, That you conversed on *that point* with the *most of us* more than once or *twice* before it came to the session.—Page 8th, That we wanted liberty to speak all ourselves, and the session should take all for truth we should advance.—That it was to us who were sustained panels at that session, that text *Heb. vii. 28.* and the reasoning from it was mentioned.—Page 10th, That we craved a copy of your minutes, and not of our charge or libel.—Page 11th, That the things contained in the copy we got was *marked in our own words*.—Page 12th, That *J. G.*'s minute was read without these paragraphs from the Confession of Faith, which he and the session did not differ about; and which was the alteration he craved to be made in it.—That hundreds knew it was read with the required alteration.—That some of us appeared that day to have fury and scorn filling our breasts.—That we condemn your intention.—That you held a conference in your own house with *J. G.* upon the difference, before *G. S.*—y.—Page 14th, That we set up conscience, not the word of God, as the infallible rule of our duty.—Page 17th, That we are guilty of rejecting Divine truths, and of imbibing and venting grievous errors.—Page 21st, That there are *few* things in the letter you reply to, but what are indisputably false.

Now, Sir, These with many other of the kind you affirm as *truths*, but we humbly conceive they would more properly bear another name.—It is easy to see the importance you assume as a historian in your reply; no doubt expecting your authority was sufficient to authenticate every thing advanced by you. Whilst a thousand such as *us reclaiming*, must pass for nothing. Especially as you have taken care not only to affirm roundly; but also to offer the sanction of your oath as a fence to your asseverations; and solemnly protested against taking ours. What is left for us? Nothing, but by silence to say Amen: Tho' we should give the lie to our consciences, and even our senses in doing so. To deny is useless.—To recriminate is to accuse you; but not exculpate ourselves.—To give our oath you have told us will be perjury.—What remains? Guilty we must be; merely because you have said so. But as your evidence is incompetent for our conviction, we must be allowed to dissent, and shall propose an appeal, which certainly will

will be agreeable to you.—We offer to produce the evidence of other persons beside ourselves, for proof of *some* particulars in question.—Undeniable circumstances in support of *others*.—And, as for what comes not under these heads, we shall refer it to you, whether you will give your own oath, or be satisfied with some of your own session, whom we shall name to you, giving their's. But if you reject this proposal, we have but another, viz. That we are willing to abide by the truth of what is advanced in the letter you reply to upon oath. So that you have your choice either to submit to the above, or be content to bear the just reproach of what is alledged against you in the letter, and of propagating things in print which have no foundation in truth. For we know no other way of deciding the difference concerning these matters of fact.

We shall next consider, and very briefly, some of the things you have misrepresented. And tho' we put not these among the things you have advanced without any foundation, yet we reckon them as contrary to your assumed character of a *true replier*.

As an instance of our venting and publishing that heresy (as you term it) before your declaration, you say, page 2d, "That one of us vented and endeavoured to defend it, before a company in his own house." Here you would insinuate that the person defended it as a principle of his own; but unhappily for you, we can produce the witnesses present to prove, that before he would speak on that point, he told them, that they were not to consider what he said as his own principles; but as there were so many Divines present, he thought Mr *Allan's* doctrine might be tried how far it was agreeable to the word of God. Accordingly, a divine present and him took one side of the question: And we are persuaded none present had any other view of the conference; tho' now made a *venting grievous errors*. But this reproach will equally affect the other Rev. Gentleman, who has often declared he had not the remotest thought of speaking on that subject as a principle of his own.—Thus, Sir, you stumble at the threshold, which in some cases would be held ominous, especially as this misrepresentation lies in the same womb (or sentence) with three f—s—ds, which of necessity must make an im——l birth.

You say one of us put a restriction upon your ministerial freedom, in saying the congregation would not be rent, "in case you did not teach that doctrine that was contrary to our opinions." If the matter will look a little worse by interpolations, we find you are not restricted there. The person's words were these, "In case you did not rent the congregation with your preaching, he should never do it with his opinions." The plain import of which is, that he intended to keep his opinions to himself; this was no restriction of your ministry; but perhaps too much so of his own christian liberty. However, rather than you would not have

have a stroke at these opinions where none in prudence could reply, you would risk the fate of the congregation in bringing it to the public by your declaration: Which you spend several pages seeking an excuse for: Accordingly in page 3d,

Y O U say, by your lecturing on *Rom. viii. 32.* "New trouble was brought upon you, by conversations, reading of papers, and requiring a sight of your notes."—If you conversed so often, it was with none of us.—As for papers there were never any read to you but *one* on the subject, which was *after* your declaration, tho' by a kind of fatality you make it a *cause thereof*: Forgetting the use of that paper, which was to represent the bad effects your declaration was like to have upon the congregation, and characters of those so traduted therein. Had we chosen to give you trouble, Sir, you gave us sufficient ground to do it otherways than in the humblest manner to let you know we were injured by the reports which you were the sole occasion of raising.

THE person who wrote and presented the above-mentioned paper, also signified, that if you would give him out of your notes the arguments you had used for eternal Sonship, he would either give you answers to them, or own the doctrine. We humbly conceive this was no great insolence in him; and not below the importance of a servant of JESUS CHRIST to grant; at least the Apostle thought it not grievous to write the same things for the edification of church members.—It is evident how hard you have been pinched to find *reasons* for that warning, (as you call it) when every trifle must be made so; especially when *effects* must be turned into *causes*, as you have done here.

Y O U go on to tell the world, that "all this was extinguished in a little time, and two of these had children baptized, and came under solemn engagements to bring them up in an agreeableness to the word of God, and to the doctrines laid down in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms." Were there no more in all your reply that required an answer, this could not be omitted. The scope is to inform your readers that we had now given up these principles formerly maintained, and come under engagements to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms *as you hold them*. But you will not deny, we hope, that both these persons made exceptions against coming under these engagements as you ordinarily lay them on, viz. To be bound to the Confession, Catechisms, and other human compositions (commonly mentioned by you on such occasions) without any difference made betwixt them, and the word of God. And without you would grant to put all these human compositions in subordination to the scriptures, (which you never do in laying on baptismal vows) they both declared they had no freedom to present their children to baptism.—This you granted to do, and actually did so to them both. Where then is the strength of this

this mighty argument against us? But tho' you have mask'd this relation with all your art to make it bear upon us, your readers have not been so blind as not to see that it recoils upon yourself. How came you (who are so very regular in discipline and government) to admit persons to sealing ordinances whom you knew had been *venting, defending, and supporting grievous, unscriptural heresies; restricting your ministerial freedom; traducing the doctrines of the Confession of faith as traditional, and not supported by Divine revelation: Yea, and guilty of spreading this infection in the congregation?*—All which were, according to your own account, prior to the baptizing these children, which was done without so much as a question concerning the matter in dispute. Besides, one of these two was ordained an *Elder*, who not only to yourself in private, but in the face of the congregation, reclaimed against being bound to human compositions as expressed in the questions of the formula, any further than he saw they bore evidence from the word of GOD. Why so lax, Sir, as admit such a nonconformist? Was our heresy so gross as to deserve excommunication a little after, and so innocent now as *with it* to be admitted to special privileges and offices in the church? We must think, Sir, that silence on this part of the affair would have been more prudent in you, as well as on that part of your warning in which you charged us with adopting such horrid principles *to please ourselves*; which, we suppose, was too glaring an encroachment upon Divine omniscience to admit of any excuse, and therefore you offer none for it.

WE cannot understand what you mean by a new outbreaking, if it be not your unexpected declaration. And now you say, we “used means to impose on the weak, spread the infection through the congregation, and trouble others.” This is a great part of the charge against us, and what you make the leading motive for bringing the affair to the public. Indeed you charged us with it before the session; but did we not refuse the justness thereof? You were not then capable to prove it; and as an evidence that you relinquished this part of the charge, it is not so much as mentioned in the copy of the minute we got, which should certainly contain the whole of the charge against us. If it was just, why was it not minuted? If groundless, why were we charged with it at all? And why now expose that to the world as our crime, which you could not prove at our trial? Nevertheless, of your industry† to find us culpable herein, we challenge you to produce the persons in the congregation whom we persuaded to embrace, or imposed our opinions

† One instance of this, was your asserting that *Ach-d E—s* told you, it was thro' our influence and persuasion that he signed the declinature: But he is so honest as to deny that ever he said so. We are sorry you engaged your own credit for the truth of it; and that you did not rather report it among other hearsays.

nions upon. If you find none, be content to bear the blame of bringing it unnecessarily to the public in your warning: And now exposing us to the world for faults that never had existence, that your unaccountable treatment of us may have some shadow of excuse.

PAGE 5th, you first interpolate the words of the letter, and then triumphs: You make the author say, "That for nine or ten Sabbaths running, he never touched the point." Such a sentence is not in all the letter. He says, page 3d, "It is none of my business to consider how you acquitted yourself on that subject.—And that you produced the monstrous doctrines of Socinus, &c. and answered them, without touching the points wherein they differed from you." What need you then ask what point he meant? Did you not know wherein we differed from you? We own it was likely you did not, in substituting things so very remote or rather contrary to our opinions in their room, as *Arianism*, &c. But we think you should have been better informed, before you spent so many Sabbaths in endeavouring to reconcile things as different as light and darkness are.

THE first sentence in page 6th, we know not whether you intend it as the words of the letter or your own: They are not in the former, and if your own, they are against you. However, we shall adopt this orphan clause, viz. Nor could you tell in all your discourses upon that subject, that the principles which we held, did—land in *Arianism*, *Sabellianism*, or *Socinianism*; nor have yet seen cause to change our opinions herein, *i. e.* you cannot tell yet in your reply, except the world take your word for the whole.

BUT to come to the promised conference, in which we are more likely to agree, as you have been so fair in relating it from the making of the promise, to the charging us as delinquents instead of performing it: However, we shall here insert both accounts. The free enquirer says, "In extraordinary complaisance, you were pleased to promise them a conference with your brethren who came to assist you at the sacrament; this promise you so far kept as to invite them to it, and appointed the time and place, which by them was viewed as uncommonly lenitive, and readily complied with.—How were their hopes with your fidelity wrecked at once, when instead of so much as offering an excuse for denying them the privilege of this promised conference, you constituted the court, and called them as panels to the bar."

THE true Replier says, page 7th, "Being loth to do any thing rashly, I was willing to defer the affair until some brethren came to assist me in sacramental-work, and promised them a conference about the matter at that time. This was agreed unto with apparent satisfaction by all parties.—The session met on Thursday evening before the sacrament, and was constituted."

Now

Now, wherein lies the difference betwixt these accounts? Both own the conference was promised, and agreed to by all parties. Both acknowledge the session was constituted, and we charged as panels without giving us the conference. And this is the very thing complained of by the free enquirer. As the replier's relation of it is the same, what fairer light has he represented it in? How can you complain of being falsely accused in this matter? We with you shall submit it to the impartial, whether the promised conference should have come before making us panels, or after? Could that be a free conference when one party was first made delinquent, and the other in the capacity of judges? We must still conclude according to your concession, Sir, that this was a more ridiculous conduct than all the former; and that the free enquirer has but done you justice in charging you with a breach of faith.

To create matter of triumph to yourself, you bring in the enquirer, alledging, that for us to "desire this conference would have betrayed a baseness of mind." He says no such thing, but affirms that on the condition you proposed, viz. That we would declare we were uncertain of the truth of these principles maintained by us, which we had learned from the word of God, and undertaking to prove them from it. To comply with this would have betrayed a baseness of mind. But let us ask you, Sir, was this condition, or any other, mentioned, when you first proposed the conference? No, it was to be a free conference. Why then would you at the session affix such a condition to it? Which, we affirm with the enquirer, bore the face of a snare in the session to require: And was much like that cruel and reproachful condition of agreement that *Nabash*, the *Ammonite*, proposed to the men of *Jabish-Gilead*, 1 Sam. xi. 2.—"On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel." You might as well have told us we should have no conference, as add a condition to it which no honest man that knew his principles could accept of. Besides, the condition was inconsistent with the nature of the conference: That one party must renounce their evidence for, and certainty in, the truth of these principles they are about to defend. This is manifestly giving up the cause before they begin to plead it.

"STRANGE! say you, they did not desire a conversation, yet were undertaking to prove, that their opinion was agreeable to the word of God! This must be a palpable contradiction, or that they wanted to force their principles upon us."—This, Sir, like many other extatic admirations flows from the force of imagination. You first imagine we did not desire the conference, then begin to wonder, and draw consequences. But is it not more strange, Sir, that you should infer from our rejecting the conversation embarrassed with your entangling condition, that we did not desire

desire it at all? When we not only craved it as was promised: But put you upon performing your promise in the face of the session. Or does it infer the forcing our opinions upon you, that we were willing to shew scripture evidence for what we believe? And where is the contradiction, in a panel to give evidence for the truth of things he is charged with as errors?

YOUR design at that meeting was not to confer with us from scripture: But to sit judges of our sentiments and condemn them judicially. Which is evident, (1.) From you constituting the session, and proposing that matter as the end of its being constituted. (2.) From denying us the conference, if we would not accept of the unreasonable condition annexed to it. (3.) From your hasty determinations.* (4.) From your refusing to hear what scripture evidence we had to offer for our sentiments. And (5.) From your producing the Confession of Faith to try our faith by, and refusing to read the scripture proofs for the articles we differed about.

Page 7th, YOU reckon it defamation to call the Confession of Faith a *human system*. Pray, Sir, do you call it a Divine system? It is likely, when you put it in the place of GOD's word to try people's faith; and call it a test of orthodoxy:—A form of sound words; as if the same which *Timothy* was enjoined to hold fast. These are characters only proper to the unerring word of God, which it is a greater pity to discard than all human systems upon earth. But more of this afterwards.

IN page 10th, you say, "Had we required a copy of our *libel* you could not have refused it, but we were the first ever sought a copy of *minutes*."

THE person you mean, as soon as called before the session, required a copy of the *charge* against him, (not your minutes). The Rev. Mr *Nimmo* replied, "There was no libel formed against him, he was called there to see if he would adhere to the doctrines in the Confession of Faith formerly read to the three elders," who had been at the bar before him. How can you say "you could not have refused," when you must be sensible how readily we can prove that you obstinately refused the copy of a charge which lay before your session for three years.—But here the replier tells the truth, tho' to the discredit of the session!—"In *ecclesiastical courts* nothing is more ordinary, than to serve the party *summoned* with a copy of the *charge* laid against them, unto which they are to answer." This you acknowledge is just, as no doubt it is. Why then, Sir, guilty of such injustice to us, as neither to give us

* An elder, who was not known to be of our sentiments, owned it in the session, and was that moment sisted as a panel, and without further examination, was in three minutes found guilty and condemned. Other two were cited, examined, concluded guilty, and excluded from communion in about five minutes. Amazing expedition!

a summons, nor a copy of charge? By your own confession, your session is either not an ecclesiastical court, or it manifestly deviated from the just rules of such courts. What a degree of sympathy you make the granting that copy! A mighty favour indeed, to let a man

† You make it an act of the greatest sympathy and indulgence to give a copy of your minutes, lest our civil interest should suffer from what the session had done; thereby intimating, how tender you were in that point.—Saying and not doing differs widely, Sir; but doing contrary to what we say, still more.—What regard you, and some of your very zealous disciples have lately shewed for the safety (rather destruction) of our civil interest, some of us know by experience: And it is evident from your answer to the following letter, sent to you by one of us, to make trial if you really would do as you said on that head.

“REV. SIR,

I AM not willing to detain you, by giving an account how far our difference affects my spirits. But as an additional weight, it is like to affect my *civil interest* nearly. And as I have heard you with pleasure often declare that you would be sorry if it was so: Then, Sir, you will be glad when I present you with an occasion to shew, that you do not want to confound the things of this world, with the kingdom of CHRIST. And evidencing you abhor that *persecution* should attend the execution of the office of a minister of CHRIST. Which you will do by writing a short line, importing, that tho’ different sentiments take place betwixt A. M. and you in *things religious*, yet it is neither your opinion nor inclination, that others should take occasion from thence to deprive him of the means of gaining his livelihood; or hinder him from being connected with civil society, in a way of getting his livelihood in the world, &c.”

The Answer.

“SIR,

I HAVE nothing to do with your civil privileges, and as I have been no way active in suppressing them, neither can I support them.

This from yours,

ALEX. NIMMO.”

Now, Sir, as the granting this line would have manifested you abhorred these *Erastian* principles; so your refusing it, declares you are well enough satisfied with such adulterations, when a party cause is to serve. And so have renounced the *Seceders’* Testimony particularly designed against *Erastian* tenets.

BUT what is of more consequence, it is rejecting what is required in both the sixth and eighth commandments, viz. To use all lawful means to preserve the life, and procure, and further the wealth and outward estate of others.

THIS you say, “*you have nothing to do with.*” But, Sir, if the person had been even your enemy, the law of GOD demanded your assistance not only to himself but his very beast. “If thine enemy hunger, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.” If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden,—thou shalt surely help him.” § The difference in religious sentiments was very great betwixt the Jews and Samaritans; yet one of the latter has the character of neighbour for his tenderness and humanity towards the other in distress. And tho’ you give up this name, (as our Lord defines it) there are others in the parable this part of your conduct gives you a very just claim to; for having wounded our reputation by your inconsiderate declaration, which tends to strip us of the means of life; like the Priest and Levite, you say you “have nothing to do with our civil privileges;” and refuse to preserve them when evidently in your power. These are not christian principles that lead people to unchristian practices. To deny our assistance to any creature in distress, while the Almighty by his bounty supports it in being, is a violation of his will, who commands us to do good unto

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all;

man know what he is condemned as a heretic and denied communion for ! But you say, " you were under no obligation." What, not obliged to do what you own to be right, and the ordinary practice of courts. Not the copy of their minutes you will say. But, Sir, had you given us a copy of charge, we had no occasion for your minutes. Turn this affair which way you please, your fault is conspicuous in it.

You take a strange method, Sir, to exculpate yourself concerning the reading of the minute that was altered. Subtract your strong affirmations, appeals to God, the world, &c. the evidence amounts to no more, than " that some hundreds know it to be false. And by comparing the original, the alteration, and " extract together, it will convince any that it is false." Now, Sir, as you have put the merit of this accusation upon such a footing, " if true, you should justly be accounted the vilest of mankind, " and utterly unfit for any society, but that of the infernal regions." We say, to pass such a sentence upon yourself, in case what the *Free Enquirer* hath said be true, and then to produce such slender evidence to the contrary, really gives us pain. You say, " Some hundreds know it to be false." It may be called millions with equal propriety. You mean the congregation who heard it read. But can you suppose any one so stupid, as to imagine, that all these could know if it was the altered minute that was read, when they knew nothing about whether it was altered or not. How then can they be evidences either for, or against it ? If we suppose a proclamation from the court, read publicly in this town, would any be so senseless as say, that all the croud that heard it, could tell what alterations it underwent in the committee that drew it ? The case is parallel, for the minute was altered in the session, which you certainly do not mean by the some hundreds, seeing they are not half a score. But your other evidence is still weaker. For tho' the original alteration and extract were compared, the question still remains, Which was read ? And if put to the whole congregation, perhaps not one could say with a safe conscience, that either this,

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all ; and in effect saying, the government of the Most High is exceptionable in maintaining such creatures in being. — Therefore, Sir, tell us no more of your sympathy and tenderness about the civil interests of any but your own party, since you have given it under your hand you have nothing to do with any other.

We had taken no notice of the above letters, had not the person been so traduced for making that request, which he needed not expect to be favoured by you, who in page 4th, glories in the honourable employment of laying a grave-stone on the christian characters of these who are so unhappy as to differ in sentiments from you ; which you call slaying, and burying their own characters ; as if all that differed from you were not only without characters as christians, but themselves the murderers of their own characters. And were it even so, they are more the objects of pity, than to complete the tragedy by laying grave-stones upon them.

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or that was read; much less risk an eternal society in the infernal regions. It would have been safer, Sir, to have given your word for evidence, and left it so.

You say, page 13th, "All of them had a free conference with a Rev. brother and me, in the presence of the elders."—Not all, only three of us; and on your part it was far from being free, except upbraiding us for setting ourselves up to preach and teach our betters, be free conferring. As to the Rev. Mr *Hunter*, (to his praise we mention his name) he reasoned with a spirit of mildness becoming a christian: The sum of his arguments is considered, page 30th of the *Dissertations*. This could not be a free conference, since the session had found us guilty long before. It was kind in the gentleman to use means to convince us wherein he supposed us wrong: But this converse with Mr *Hunter*, Aug. 10, could not perform your promise, May 22, when instead of conferring, sustained us delinquents, and proceeded with us accordingly.

THERE are sundry other misrepresentations in your *Reply*; but as we chuse not to detain you, Sir, with a particular review of them, so we could not clear ourselves of the charge of prolixity, were we to enumerate all the things entirely foreign to the point, tending only to amuse the inconsiderate: This would be to transcribe more than half your *Reply*, and so be faulty in the same respect.

YOU certainly supposed your readers endued with very weak memories, especially the impartial public, &c. to whom you make about as many appeals as you have pages.—Nevertheless of your promise to take no notice of sarcasms, that subject is often resumed.—That our opinions have not, nor cannot be proved agreeable to scripture, you tell us *only* eight times. And that your principles and terms of communion are so, you make a whole dozen repetitions of.—Our errors, misconduct, or antisciptural principles, is but about *seventeen* times mentioned.—And the Free Enquirer as often traduced for favouring them or us. Had these particulars been *seven*, instead of *seventy*, your reply had been shorter, and the strength (or rather weakness) of your reasoning appeared less in disguise. But in this we suppose, you have assumed the office of a schoolmaster that lay so near your mind, who is obliged by frequent repetitions, to draw his pupils into the habit of knowing and believing some things to be true upon his authority, because not capable to demonstrate them to their capacities.

UNDER this head we cannot escape that very rich period, page 1st, "Free Enquirers will be free thinkers, and free writers too, who can hinder them?" A notable discovery! But where's the crime? To enquire freely, is the duty of all, and the glory of protestants. To think freely, is an innate principle in every individual of mankind, which they cannot be divested of more than their
their

their being. To write freely, is the privilege of *British* subjects. And did you lay aside any of these in writing your Reply? Can it be a crime, what you as a man, and a christian, must daily exercise?

NOR should we neglect what you say you were *necessitated* to mention, viz. the authority of Mr *Ralph Erskine*, page 3, 4. Which was wholly superfluous, after human authorities were all set aside; even that of the venerable *Westminster* assembly, as incompetent evidence, and the matter submitted only to the Divine testimony; what necessity then for producing the sentiments of one Divine? Especially one whose reputation as a christian, and divine, you in connexion with the synod you belong to had endeavoured to blast, in passing the greater sentence of excommunication upon him. He must be delivered over to Satan for his unsoundness, yet his sentiments composed since that sentence made the standard to try people's faith. Tho' to us, Mr *Erskine's* memory and works are very dear; yet we humbly conceive, another human testimony (since you are so fond of them) would have suited you better,

PAGE 6th, You call it a plain truth, "That our opinions were so near a-kin to the *Socinians*, that we could not abide to hear them confuted, &c." This must be of the same consequence with our opinions having a tendency to *Arianism*, *Sabellianism*, &c. you have equally proved both, i. e. proved neither.

COULD you ever have a fairer opportunity to prove these things than when writing against our opinions? But this you have never so much as attempted to do in all your Reply. Your saying so is sufficient, and no doubt you expected your words would carry a determined signification to your readers, viz. that we were *Arians*, &c. This you teach them from experience, page 15th, "Whenever I hear *Arianism* or *Socinianism* mentioned, I conceive of them to be nothing but the principles which *Arians* and *Socinians* hold." Now they must have dull conceptions indeed, that will not conceive us to be of these denominations when you have mentioned them so often: And added such cogent proofs, as, "I freely declare that I will never decline from calling an *Arian* an *Arian*, a *Sabellian* a *Sabellian*, nor from saying that opinions tending to these have such a tendency.—These men's opinions are a-kin to the *Socinians*, &c." Here is *ipse dixit* for the whole. This is the concisest method of proving things imaginable: And a short way of making heretics. But we must be allowed to say, that such weakness makes evident your incapacity to prove our opinions heretical. It is not your saying so, and another going as far as you do, that will prove it: But that is the sum of your evidence to that purpose through the whole of your Reply.

THE Free Enquirer puts this question, "Has not every person a power of leaving the communion of any society, as well as a power

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“ power to join it, when the terms of communion the society proposes to him, are such as in conscience he cannot agree with ?” You were aware how much of your cause depended upon a fair answer to this question, therefore you neither answer positively, nor negatively, which were both dangerous for you. The first was so, for then by your own consent, page 13th, you had no right from God to excommunicate us, and so would have confirmed every thing the Free Enquirer alledges against you : The last was equally dangerous, by giving a thrust at christian liberty, conscience, reason, and seceders’ principles avowed in their act and testimony. What suits you better than either of these, is to spend two pages turning the question into an argument of your own devising, then branding it as most abominable, a setting up of conscience as the infallible rule. Thus you evade the question by a multitude of words which have not the least reference to it. You always suppose that your terms of communion are unerringly fixed on scripture, therefore sinful in us to forsake communion with you. But the matter comes to this, Who is to judge for a person whether terms of communion be agreeable to God’s word or not ? If he take the imposer’s word for it, and so approves of them, his faith is implicit, he that moment commences *Papist*, submitting his conscience blindly to the dictates of the church. If he does not this, what then must he do ? Why, judge for himself whether these terms are agreeable to scripture. And if his conscience, informed from scripture, concludes these terms disagreeable thereto, it is his duty to decline that communion from a principle of conscience. Is this setting up conscience as the unerring rule ? Or must the man continue in that communion, and so declare war against the God of heaven, whose deputy conscience is ; and live under the constant accusations of that monitor and judge he perpetually carries in his own breast. “ For if our heart condemn us, GOD is greater than our heart.—Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards GOD.”†

BUT the fault in the question is, that the word of GOD is not mentioned instead of conscience. The Free Enquirer lays no more on conscience than the apostle did. § And tho’ the word of GOD had been put in, the Replier’s ordinary refuge was ready, “ That it was only our conceptions of their terms being disagreeable to scripture, but our thinking so did not make it so.” But, Sir, our thinking so from scripture evidence will make it so to us. And what do you think the seceders had more for ground of separation from the church of *Scotland* ? Did that church acknowledge their terms of communion were unlawful ? No, they maintained that

† 1 John iii. 20, 21.

§ 1 Tim. i. 5. Acts xxiv. 16. Rom. ix. 1.—ii. 15.—xiii. 5. Titus i. 15. 1 Cor. viii. 7. 2 Cor. i. 12.—iv. 2. 1 Pet. iii. 16, &c.

that their terms were agreeable to the word of God. Was not this sufficient to make the seceders heretics, in separating from them upon the supposition that their terms of communion were not such as they in conscience could agree with? We would know what peculiar privilege the seceders had of judging for themselves in that case, which other christians have not in judging of their terms of communion? But say you, "They are granted all the liberty the word of God allows them." What liberty is it, so long as they are restricted to your opinion, or some other fallible men's, concerning the meaning of scripture? The church of *Rome* gives a liberty as extensive; some judge of the meaning of scripture, and the vulgar must be satisfied with their judgment as the true sense; and so every one must believe as the church doth. This liberty depends not on revelation, but the good-will of the church. So that the difference betwixt them and us is only this; they have their teachers' interpretation without the scriptures; and we have the scriptures with our teachers' interpretation, which last we are obliged to believe. This is a change of popes, but not of popery. The *Free Enquirer* alledges, it is most like a christian "to believe and profess what he sees evidences in the word of God to support."—This you say, "makes as much for any *Arian* in the world as for him." Now since conscience, and evidences from the word of God are both excluded; what remains, but to give up all to the judgment and discretion of our teachers?—But what must poor souls do who cannot see the propriety of their interpretations; and in the mean time are assured by the great God, that they must be accountable to him themselves as individuals, for every thing they believe or profess? One would think they ought to be satisfied in their own judgments before they assent to these interpretations.—But alas! if they search the scriptures to see if these things are so, and find evidences to the contrary, they are brought to this woeful dilemma, either to be pronounced heretics in dissenting from the opinions of their leaders; or profess and believe contrary to their consciences and the evidences of revelation.—This, Sir, is the case betwixt you and us. And let your Reply be rightly attended to, it will not obscurely point out this doctrine of implicit faith.

THERE is another point you labour much in these pages, viz. That we were in communion with you when you excommunicated us. It may be asked, Sir, if it be possible for a person to leave your communion when once he is in it? Your reasoning would infer it was not. Our declinature was given in writing, subscribed by us, and the causes mentioned; tho' not sufficient to you, they were so to us; it was received in a constituted session, read, and kept without any answers returned. By your own consent then, we were no longer under your jurisdiction when you accepted the declinature, in which we explicitly renounced your authority over us. Had you

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you thought it unjust; it should have been rejected or answered. You could not but know after reading, that it was intended to dissolve our connexion as members of your society; and in as much as you accepted thereof, the separation was mutual on both sides. We could expect no further privilege in communion with your congregation 'till we had withdrawn our declinature: How could you pretend to have still authority over us as if in full communion with you?—Sir, as to expose this, and the way you take to defend it as they easily might, would be too like a design to expose you and your session; we shall only add this reflection:

THAT when any degree of persecution is recommended to the world in print, it is the duty of every friend of christian liberty to appear against it. And as the principles couched in your Reply, make it evident there is only the want of countenance from civil power, (which we may thank God runs in another channel) to destroy the christian liberty which God hath made the privilege of every individual that comes not up to your standard, or meaning, imposed upon the scriptures. We should think it strange if men were so infatuated, as not to hold such principles in detestation. In vain have protestants cast off the yoke of *Romish* slavery, if they are obliged to take on another equally severe. Every christian must certainly think himself free in his choice of what doctrines he is to believe beside the scriptures. He cannot be divested of that power the Almighty God hath endowed him with, of judging for himself in things of the last consequence to him, and for which he himself, and not another for him, must be judged, according to the use and improvement he makes of the rights and privileges bestowed upon him: Therefore, should beware of giving up his judgment and conscience to be governed by any man or society, 'till he can find security from them, that they shall answer at the bar of God for what errors may be in his faith; and for his affronting the Majesty of heaven, in rejecting his Divine command of judging for himself; and setting up fallible mortals in the throne of God, as lords over his conscience.

WE must now dispatch the Reply, and supercede what was further intended upon it, to give place for some remarks upon a later performance. Therefore shall only remark on the 4th general fault we find to your Reply: That it was certainly indecent in you, Sir, to treat the gentleman so, whom you supposed to be the author of the letter: And particularly so, when it is considered, that you had all the certainty which any person could require that he was not the author of it, previous to your writing the Reply. Did you not desire a Rev. gentleman, to enquire at the supposed author whether he was so or not? This he did, and was certified in the strongest terms, from his own mouth, that he was not. Did not this gentleman return you an answer, assuring you the other he enquired

enquired at was not the author? Was not this sufficient to satisfy any reasonable person? But you would still sustain him the author, in spite of the clearest evidence to the contrary; and so sport yourself with the gentleman's evidence, and your own incredulity: For it seems you did not intend to credit his information, tho' you sent him to obtain it for you.

BUT if you ask why the true author concealed his proper name? We answer, it was to save you the labour of throwing out personal reflections, and that you might have only the subject itself to consider. And you have given evidence that his jealousy was well founded, since rather than you would not be dissecting characters, you would substitute an author which you were assured had not the least hand in writing the letter.

BUT lest you should repeat your error, we certainly inform you, that the real author is the same with the author of the dissertations.*—And now perhaps you have sufficient matter for another reply, containing all the hearsays concerning him. And indeed we are sorry to hear so many say, that this is a department among the *litterati* which you seem peculiarly qualified for. As hearsays make but lame arguments, had you in place of them, and other disparaging characteristics, substituted some better arguments in defence of your own and sessions' conduct towards us; your candor would have been more conspicuous, and your Reply perhaps had more admirers.

BEING now to conclude, permit us, Sir, to express how deeply we lament, the many unhappy and unchristian-like consequences that have attended this difference betwixt you and us! What occasion enemies to religion take to insult it, with the professors thereof in general, when they find the strictest of them, in constant strife, who shall be most active in destroying the reputations and interests of others: Making detraction and defamation the business of their lives; and all under colour of zeal for religion, as if it were now become a sanctuary for the grossest immoralities, and an excuse for the destruction of all that is dear to their fellow christians.

SUFFER us also, to lament our own fate, in the very hard treatment measured out to us: Who for embracing truths, which appeared so to us, not from any principles of prejudice, education, or party; but from evidences drawn immediately from the word of GOD; which we could not recede from, without offering violence to our understandings, consciences, and duty to GOD; and manifestly betraying the privilege he hath granted us, of believing for ourselves what we see the strongest evidences from revelation to support. For this, as it were the greatest crime, we must be brought under the dismal necessity of either renouncing what we were persuaded in our own judgments were the truths of GOD: Or in refusing

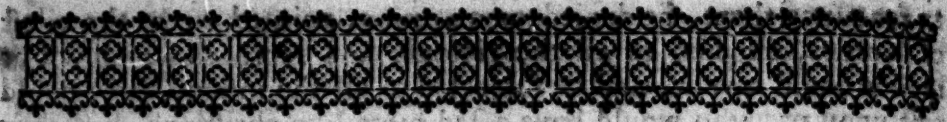
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• A Pamphlet, entitled *a View of the Trinity, &c.*

to renounce them, be denied communion, pointed out as the vilest of heretics, exposed to all the ridicule and reproach which wit or malice could invent, and be subjected to all the infamy those could cast upon us, who would have acted more like christians, had they mourned over our fall (as they supposed); and used means for our recovery; than with all the vehemence of declared enemies, to go about and traduce and calumniate us as the vilest of men. This practice must be surprising to every person of candor; and a dishonour to christianity itself. That the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, should be used as an incitement to the passions of men, so visible in the acrimonious party quarrels, which have been substituted in the place of christian piety and brotherly love, which are essential ingredients in the heaven-born religion of the prince of peace. How inconsiderate a part do they act, who proclaim how little themselves deserve the name of christians, by their forwardness and diligence to ruin the christian characters, and even civil interests of others? Manifold are the examples we could produce; but as we chuse rather to lament their weakness, and wish their reformation, than recriminate: So we take this opportunity to declare our real sorrow, that you, Sir, whom we always persuaded ourselves, were far otherways inclined, should in so many instances have been so nearly connected.—But as far as we know our own hearts, and these things concern us, we sincerely forgive you, and others who have so manifestly injured us. And desire to pray that GOD may grant forgiveness; and grace to preserve you all from sin, and every snare of the devil: And that at last you may be made possessors of the peaceful regions of immortal bliss. When all the jarring sentiments of CHRIST's disciples shall be for ever lost in oblivion, and they eternally united in harmonious concord, celebrating the praises of GOD and the LAMB:—That we may all live here as expectants of that pure inheritance, into which nothing can enter that defileth or maketh a lie, and be ready for the enjoyment thereof, when time with us shall be no more; is the prayer of us, who remain. Rev. SIR,

YOURS, &c.

Note, The above is expressed in the plural, because some others are concerned, who approved of publishing it; and knowing most of the facts here vindicated, are ready on any proper occasion to attest the truth of them.



A N

EXAMINATION, &c.

*Dreams are but interludes, which fancy makes;
 When monarch reason sleeps, this mimic wakes,
 Compounds a medley of disjointed things,
 A court of coblers, and a mob of kings.* DRYDEN.

*When apparitions fill the mind,
 The soul's unnerv'd, and reason's blind.* R—.

S dreams are but fictions, the effects of a disturbed brain or imagination, it might be reckoned as profuse in me to be particular in replying to such visionary fables, as it was in the pretended quaker to publish his dreams: But as "his waking thoughts" are added, which are as fictitious, at least specious, as what he calls "the visions of his head" upon his bed, allow me to make the following short remarks upon the whole.

THE character of a quaker is so ill supported through the whole of the performance, that he must be wilfully blind, or very little acquainted with quaker principles, who does not see it to be counterfeited: In this respect the author has not only exposed his own weakness; but most grossly abused the people of that party; who universally hold these things in the greatest detestation, which this metamorphosed quaker is here made to defend. This impotency is not only obvious in every page; but any ordinary reader will see, what signals of distress, like a ship in a storm, this dreamer shews, and like the Psalmist's destitute mariner, staggers to and fro, and is at his wits end, for want of matter in Mr M—y's letter to find fault with. This makes me think he had better consigned three-fourths of it to oblivion, with what was culled from it after his manuscript was shewn to his friends, owing to a tenderness in some of them to the characters of other men, which it would seem this Dreamer has got a very small share of.

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As the dreamer says he had read Mr *M—y*'s letter before he "dropped fast asleep," let me ask him, why he did not detect that lying demon which appeared to him, while he utters with such demonian rage so many things that are not in the letter, and so demon like, throws such a reproach upon the sacred word of God, and the inspired *Solomon*, a penman thereof, in calling his words, "a list of the very opprobrious names given by Mr *M—y*?" It would appear that either the dreamer acts in concert with this lying spirit, which here exhibited the true character of satan the father of lies: Or that he intended to expose this apparition, by publishing his lies and abuse of revelation to the world.

If *Solomon* had affronted Mr *N—o*, why does he not take him to task for it? And not with impudence, peculiar to demons, call *Solomon*'s language the words of Mr *M—y*. By this rule of his, every text that is used in either the Reply or this performance of the dreamer, are not the words of God, but the words of the Replier and Dreamer.

BUT let me not accuse the demon for what he is not guilty of, when I read again, I find they are not the apparition's words, but a comment of the fictitious quaker, or rather Mr *N—o*, who it seems challenges the honour of writing the notes.

Now, I cannot help expressing my sorrow, that any of his character and profession should have in the least countenanced, much less corrected, printed, and written notes of approbation to such a heterogenous jumble of incoherent and indecent reveries, as are contained in this performance of the Dreamer. How ludicrous must it be among the scoffers at religion and every thing serious? How grating to the christian ear, to find the sacred word of God, and the privileges of christians so shamefully treated? Who could ever imagine how it could enter the heart of any christian to compare the right of private judgment, to a right of *pissing* in another's face! Which plainly insinuates there is no right of private judgment at all, seeing none can be so void of common sense as to pretend a right for the other. Such language could hardly be expected from professed enemies to religion, who must certainly conclude, that whatever is preached and professed about religion and piety is all a solemn mockery, when they find the greatest devotees thereto, who, by a blazing profession, say stand by for we are holier than you; yet sporting themselves wantonly with the institutions of heaven, which are so plainly taught in the word of God, so often sealed with the blood of martyrs, and the very distinguishing characteristics of protestants!

BUT this part of the dream is not only ludicrous and profane, but it is nonsense. What comparison can we suppose betwixt the right a man has to think for himself in matters of religion, and a brutal and more than impertinent action, which for any one to do

to another, offers violence to common sense? Is there no difference betwixt a man thinking he hath a right from the word of God to judge what he should receive from men as matter of faith; and doing that to his neighbour which would expose his own shame, be rude, unmannerly, and indecent in the highest degree? He who would attempt such an action, only deserves to have *Horace's* rule applied to him, *Testes laud amque salacem demeteret ferrum.*

THERE are so many lineaments of the Replier in this Dreamer, that one would be ready to think it is the same person: But the Dreamer's declared connections with familiar spirits, forbid me in charity to think it is so.

HOWEVER, there is an uncommon agreement of sentiment prevails through both performances. The Replier, page 4, concludes some that differed from him to be self-murderers of their own characters, and glories in his own humanity in laying a grave-stone upon them. And this Dreamer brings Mr M—y in guilty of *felo de se*, or self-murder, (pretty language for pious professors indeed!) and no doubt accounts it an act of charity to bury his character also. But with their leave, the verdict of the coroner's inquest was necessary for both, before they had found them guilty, much less buried them. This perhaps may be sufficiently supplied by the authority of the Replier and his session, who upon the same principle, may bring in all the people of *Britain* that differ in opinion from them guilty of *felo de se*; but this will be so far from proving any man guilty, that every one of common sense must laugh at their folly.

BUT what makes Mr M—y a self-murderer? Why, it was his being so credulous as to believe that the Replier pointed him out as the author of the letter he replied to. This he had very good ground for, not only from the scope of the Reply, and citing and misconstruing a passage from the preface to his sermons: But from the united voice of the Replier's congregation, who were fond of certifying all they had access to, that he was the very person intended. But if all are self-murderers that thought Mr M—y pointed at in the Reply, there will be work enough for both Replier and Dreamer in burying and laying on grave-stones: But unhappily for the Replier, he must do this good office for the most of his own congregation who are under the same predicament.

MR M—y needs not be much offended with the character which this se—ng quaker hath given him, while there have been so many that have shined in the church much longer than he, with fair and unblemished characters, yet being so unhappy as to differ from that party, must go down to the grave with all the odium they could cast upon them. It seems to be held as a peculiar right, to which se—ers are only intitled, to abuse and reproach those that differ from them, who yet have no right to defend themselves; but must remain content with the characters of liars, *Arians*, &c. or what

what the godly prelates of that party shall please to impose upon them; which leads me to observe,

THAT both Replier and Dreamer make a mighty noise about *Arianism, Socinianism, &c.* being called words of course and without meaning, when applied to persons they have no relation to. Tho' the meaning of words are generally settled by custom, yet when persons use words they neither know the meaning of, nor why they apply them to such persons, certainly these must be words of course to them.—Suppose some of the Replier's congregation should call the men that lately differed from them *Arians, Sabellians, &c.* and being asked, as some of them were, what these names meant, should answer they did not know; would not these be words of course and void of meaning to them?

If a seceder should be asked the meaning of the word *Latitudinarian*? If he could not tell, pray what was it more to him than a word of course in his swearing against it in the bond of the covenant?

BUT the Dreamer goes on with his witless criticisms, and is so fond of reproaching, that even the printer's boy cannot escape him, who now must be blamed for the ungrammatical citation from Mr *M—y's* preface, and no doubt for changing the *Latin* participle *crambe recocta* also. But the Dreamer did not mind, I suppose, that Mr *M—y* has the Replier's angry letter, vindicating *recocta* to be the proper construction, and withal desires him to go to his Dictionary again, or borrow one of his friends if he had none of his own. This wholly clears the printer of the charge; and so the trifling criticisms of menacing pedagogue, man of the rod, &c. might have been spared: Which last, I suppose, will be as singular phraseology as *crambe recocta*: But I hope this disguised quaker will find us examples the next time he dreams.

As for groundless surmises being incapable of sufficient evidence, it may be observed, that many things may have no truth in themselves, which to us have the highest probability. Thus many judges have been imposed upon by evidence which they could not reject, being brought to prove things which in themselves were without real existence, and so must be groundless. I suppose had two or three persons whom the Replier could credit, told him they saw Mr *M—y* write the Free Enquirer's letter, he would have reckoned this sufficient evidence, tho' in fact it was a groundless surmise.

THE Dreamer enquires, how Mr *M—y* will “account for his “supposing that either a weak man or a strong man can believe “without evidence?” But he says no such thing, only supposes that the Replier had believed without *sufficient* evidence. Which is too common among many in matters of much greater concern than the character of Mr *M—y*; as for instance, there are many who

who believe that the **DIVINE PERSON** of the **LORD JESUS** was **BEGOTTEN**, and that his **PERSONALITY** with all his **DIVINE PERFECTIONS** were **COMMUNICATED** to him from the **FATHER**. I would be obliged to the Dreamer, would he produce sufficient evidence for this doctrine from the scripture. But to go on.

MR *M—y* hath these words, “ I am ashamed to think that any person, who assumes the name of a teacher of righteousness, should publish a report of persons, they are not acquainted with, from *hearsay*, and the uncertain voice of fame, which have so often been found at fault.”

ON this sentence the Dreamer learnedly observes, that it is like a crooked Ram’s horn; why, (1.) Mr *M—y* stumbles by joining a single person to a plural verb. (2.) He defileth his conscience by vain repetitions, a sin against the precepts of both the gospel and grammar. (3.) He writes found at fault. Grievous crimes indeed! But as to the first, the quaker is so intoxicated with the spirit of criticism, that he cannot see an antecedent standing immediately before a relative, but brings a false one from the beginning of the sentence. The sentence is intended to shew how uncharitable it is, to publish reports upon persons without first acquainting them, that they may have opportunity to disallow them if false, or confess them if true. So that it is only a dream that “ a single person is married to a plural verb :” And the second is like unto it: For none can suppose that writing to Mr *N—o*, and praying to **GOD** are of the same consequence; in the latter we are in danger of defiling our consciences by vain repetitions; but I think not in the former. Besides, the act concerning the doctrine of grace (a *seceding standard*) tells us there are no precepts in the gospel at all: How then can Mr *M—y* sin against them? And he is the first certainly that has found this new way of sinning against grammar. But with those that can make sins and duties at pleasure, it is easy to make it an aggravated offence, to mention *hearsay* and the *voice of fame* in one sentence. And were it not for fear of sinning against grammar, I would say they are very often different; for I have heard it said, that a quaker wrote the Dream; but the *voice of common fame* says a *seceding minister* wrote it: Now is there no difference betwixt a *seceding minister* and a quaker?

THE Dreamer betrays his own ignorance in saying he knows no warrant for writing “ found at fault.” For besides many other unexceptionable grammarians, he will find it in *Johnson’s* and *Rider’s* Dictionaries, and in *Dr Swift’s* works, such idioms are oftener than once. And no less does his folly appear in putting the question, “ Were ever the names of heresies applied to persons?” Surely, or how came *Clark*, *Whiston*, &c. to get the name of *Arians* otherways; their names were *Samuel Clark*, and *John Whiston*; but when

when they are called *Arians* and *Socinians*; this must be an application of heretical names to persons.

BUT let us see how he vindicates the Replier in applying heretical names to persons not tainted with the heresies. Well, it's by setting up the Replier as equal with the apostle *John* in the propriety of applying heresies to men: Or rather brings down the apostle to the Replier. For he says, that *John* had no knowledge of any person in *Pergamos* that could be accused with holding *Balaam's* heresy. But tho' this should be granted, will it infer that *JESUS CHRIST* did not know who in *Pergamos* this heresy was applicable to, for it was him that sent *John* to deliver the message to that church? Now, if the Replier be as certain that the persons he applies these heretical names to are *Arians*; and *Socinians*; as *CHRIST* was in the other case, then the Dreamer gains his point, otherwise he must be dreaming still. But it is likely he imagined it was something Divine that inspired him in his sleep, for he speaks with equal certainty concerning his revelation; as *John* did of his; saying, we may with equal propriety interrogate the *Apostle* as the *Replier*.—Amazing!

IN page 6th, we have the Dreamer's vindication of the Replier's vow or covenant. And sure *Egyptian* bondage, nor gally slavery were not so unnatural, as the forcing this quaker to vindicate that which destroys the whole of his own principles, and apologize for that oath in which quakerism is renounced. But how is he recompenced? With the character of a malicious slanderer by him whom he so awkwardly is attempting to excuse. The Dreamer says twice that the Replier had vowed to *extirpate* error. No, saith the Replier in his note, the word *extirpate* is not to be found in it, and therefore is a *malicious slander*. A poor reward indeed! But as humanity obliges to protect the injured, I must let the Replier know that the quaker is in the right, for he will find the word *extirpation* in the 2d par. of the Solemn League and Covenant, and the words *root out* in the National Covenant, with many other of stronger emphasis. Therefore it is a slander both upon quaker and covenants to say the words are not to be found in them.

BUT to come to the Dreamer's defence. He gives us a definition of persecution, which I find no fault with; but he entirely fails in clearing the management of these covenants from persecution, which was his principal purpose. For it is well known that these covenants were enforced by the highest pains in law when the civil power happened to be on that side: And no seceder will deny, that the manner these covenants were imposed was the occasion of much perjury and profanation, especially from 1638 to 1650, when many thousands were forced to swear, who had no knowledge or faith about what they were swearing. Then both church and state conspired to force every one under the obligation of these covenants:

Which

Which is evident from the acts of the Assembly at *Edinburgh, Aug. 30, 1639, Sess. 23.* By which they not only by their authority order all to subscribe the Confession of Faith and Covenants under pain of the highest church censures; but petition the Privy Council to add their authority: And also petition the Parliament to enjoin the subscription under *all civil pains.* Accordingly the Privy Council ordained the subscription of them, *Aug. 30, 1639.* And the Parliament, *June 11, 1640,* ordains and commands all his Majesty's subjects, of what rank and quality soever, to subscribe the Confession of Faith and Covenant, *under all civil pains.* *Char. I. Parl. 2, Act 5.* Could this be called a voluntary subscription when people were obliged to swear, however different their private sentiments were; and in swearing say as the covenant begins, "We protest, that after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God; therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and affirm before God and the whole world, that this only is the true christian faith, &c." Was not this persecution, to force subjects to swear in the most solemn manner to what they were ignorant of, or very much disinclined to, and that under the highest censures and punishments?

But the Dreamer will perhaps say, what is all this to the Replier? The seceders do not enforce them by civil penalties; and they have changed the obligation to the Covenants, therefore cannot be chargeable with such persecution.

As to the first, there is good reason for it, the civil powers are not of their party. But were circumstances to suit, as the note writer says, page 11th, they would act the same tragedy; which is plain from the presbytery lamenting in their answers to Mr *Nairn's* dissent, page 39, "Nor are we so situated as our reformers, in having the concurrence of the civil powers, for managing necessary and lawful process against malignants." In the same answer, they espouse that act of Parliament whereby princes were obliged to swear, "That they should be careful to root out of their lands and empire all heretics, that should be convicted by the kirk." They also say, "that it was not suitable to their present circumstances, to blend civil and ecclesiastical matters in the oath of God in renewing the Covenants." From all which 'tis plain, there requires no more than a change of circumstances to renew the old scene of commanding, enforcing, ordaining, and compelling all to subscribe, as the zealous reformers had done before.

BUT they have altered the covenants and the obligation to them. This no doubt is a *step of reformation!* The Dreamer defines the covenant to be a "promise to obey all the commands of God," so must be of the same import with that of *Israel, Exod. xix. 8.* "All that

that the LORD hath spoken, we will do." The laws of GOD none will deny, are of perpetual obligation; and seceders constantly teach that the Covenants are of moral, and so of perpetual obligation upon posterity, whether they swear to them or not, and this certainly the laws of GOD are:—Yet they have changed the articles of the Covenants; and the note writer says, "they are to be suited to times, places, and circumstances." But where got they an authority to alter the laws of GOD, or change the obligation to that which is morally binding?—It must be either the substance, or manner of expressing the Covenants that is binding. If the first, that is the laws of GOD and CHRIST, as the Dreamer says, which were morally binding, antecedent to either making or mending the Covenants, and could not be subject to alteration. If the latter, it must follow, that the moral obligation of the Covenants in their former form of expression must cease when it is altered, they cannot be both binding at the same time when so different. How shall we then know whether it is the Covenants made by the Assembly, or those mended by seceders, that is binding upon the succeeding generations? If a church judicature hath power to make one alteration in *perpetual obligations*, they may make a thousand, and go on *ad infinitum*; and so we shall be for ever uncertain what is binding, and what not.

MR M—y says, the Replier had sworn to root out all opinions but his own. The Dreamer says, he is sworn to extirpate all error. Now we cannot doubt that the Replier thinks every opinion erroneous but his own; and therefore is sworn to extirpate all that do not agree with him. So that Mr M—y says no more of the Replier than the Dreamer does.

WHAT I have said is not directly against Covenants; but the abuse of them: And shews how fictitious the Dreamer's account is of the Replier's vow; which by an unjustifiable use of it, hath been the occasion of more persecution than ever was in *Britain* besides.

MR M—y says, "the word of GOD, without the consideration of conscience, has no more fitness to direct men than other animals." The Dreamer says, "The word of GOD is the infallible rule among rational and moral agents." Which plainly supposeth it can be no rule to any other. Here they are agreed. For without a principle of conscientiousness, no being can be called rational or moral. Wherein men agree with animals, the word of GOD can be of no use to them, without we suppose some other consideration, viz. understanding and conscience, by which men are capable of using it. This is plain from the Dreamer's own sentiments; But he is so fond of differing, as to fix a contrary meaning to the words, viz. "That conscience must fix a meaning to the word of GOD before it can be fit to direct men more than beasts."

And this he proves to be the true meaning, by quoting a golden sentence, as he calls it, from Mr M—y's letter, which was never in it; and so makes him say, that a "man may judge and receive what *he thinks fit* from the word of GOD." Mr M—y is speaking of human doctrines, and inferences held forth by men to be believed, of which every man has a right to receive as much and no more than he thinks right or agreeable to the word of GOD; but the Dreamer will have the word of GOD itself intended here. Is not this a gross perversion? It was not possible any person awake and in his senses could so mistake without design.

THE same justice he does to this sentence, page 14th, where having cited this clause from the letter, "every man hath undoubtedly a right to judge for himself concerning the meaning of scripture, and cannot receive it but by an assent of his own judgment." Which the Dreamer says no man in his senses will deny. But what way will he find it faulty? He takes a part of this sentence, and a part of another, transposeth both parts, points it to answer his purpose, and then barefacedly cites them as words of the letter, and the meaning of the other sentence. Is this justice, Mr Dreamer? To put a bad sense upon a person's words when they will bear a more favourable one, is base: But to transpose, interpolate, and change the pointing, to make an author speak nonsense or error, is an affront to religion, reason, and common sense. By the use of this method the Dreamer's best sentences might be made blasphemy; and the most elegant composition, unintelligible jargon.

I WOULD ask the Dreamer, how he came to approve of the Confession of Faith? Was it not because he was persuaded in his own conscience that it was agreeable to scripture? Or how came the Replier's society to fix the meaning of scripture? Did not their consciences tell them that their inferences were justly drawn from scripture? If they did so, how come others to be guilty in using the same privilege? If they did not, then they have believed implicitly without any judgment of their own.

BUT I must not omit that marvelous definition of conscience given by the Replier in his note: He says, it is "an intellectual power, by which an assent is given unto the principles of moral operations." Which is right in genus, but wrong in species and use. That it is an intellectual power is right. But that it always assents to the principles of moral action is false. These principles are either external, or internal; the word of GOD is the external principle of moral operation; but this many consciences have not yet assented to. If motives of action in the mind are internal principles, the conscience often dissents from these; for the Apostle tells us that our hearts or consciences condemn us.

BESIDES, it is not the work of conscience to assent, but to judge

of

of motives and actions. When the mind assents, it is called the understanding or will; when it judgeth, it is the conscience. To assent is to believe, not to judge. This definition belongs to the understanding, if the Replier still holds by the school definition of faculties in the soul; but perhaps he has forgot, and so substituted the conscience in room of another power of the soul, as he seems to have done with the *Greek* word *συννοησις* he uses, which is not in the language. The printer's boy has perhaps been found at fault again. It would be needful either to use a *Lexicon*, or never trouble *Greek* or *Latin* languages.

PAGE 8th begins with some terms extremely delicate, and very decently applied to Mr M—y; such as fire, frying-pan, pope, popery, devil, bottomless depths, scepticism, &c. From his culinary phrases some might imagine he had been cook; however, such kitchen stuff is tolerably innocent: But such a circle of frightful words together, from one who was so lately conversing with demons, looks so conjuration like, that I must say, from pope, devil, and bottomless pit, *Libera nos Domine*.

AT the bottom of this sensible page, the Dreamer quotes a passage from Mr M—y's letter, and roundly tells us that no protestant will differ from what he saith: Yet immediately calls it a *noisy parade* of words, an *invidiously designed* sentence. From whence we infer the Dreamer is no protestant. He blames Mr M—y for judging Mr N—o upon evidence. But here he repays him with interest, without evidence. He cannot find fault with the passage itself, therefore falls upon the author's design. This must be uncharitable presumption indeed! Who boldly steps into the throne of God, now, Mr Dreamer? From whence were you endued with such penetration, as to dissect the intention of the speaker, when his words are without exception?

HE says, "the Replier and his session never set up for dictators for every individual upon earth." This is fine *Logic*; every individual upon earth, are not in the Replier's congregation; therefore there are no individuals in it. But if they dictate to any one individual, it is the same presumption as to kind, with pretending to dictate for the whole.

BUT I must pass over many things in these pages, to come to the particular purpose intended in writing these remarks, which was to shew the weakness of the Dreamer's subtle and specious reasoning in favour of human systems, to the prejudice of christian liberty, and the Divine authority and use of the sacred word of God.

BUT before I proceed, it must be observed how apt the similitude is which the Dreamer produces, to prove that men are accountable to others than the Almighty, for what their consciences receive from the word of God. It is no less than that of *King*

Charles

Charles the first, who, because he stretched the prerogative, imposed upon his subjects, and subverted their sacred and civil rights and privileges, was therefore by the laws of the land, accountable for these depredations to his subjects whom he had thus so manifestly injured.—So that because one man is accountable to another for the injuries he does to him, contrary to religion, reason, and common sense; therefore he is accountable to him for his inward sentiments, and what his conscience receives from the word of God. Can any one possibly find the least connection here? What, no difference betwixt the sentiments of a man's mind which he gathers from the word of God for himself, and his actions with respect to society! If his reasoning hold, God is not *alone* Lord of the conscience. But to keep to the simile, which is admirably suited to the author's purpose! And I cannot help thinking that the hand of the Replier is therein, from its likeness to these of the schoolmaster and scholar, &c. in the Reply, which were as ingeniously applied in a similar case. I am persuaded, if King *Charles* had made no more of the prerogative and liberties of his subjects than a case of conscience or matter of sentiment, he might have gone to his fathers in peace for them. He was condemned for what he did, not for what he believed. In all King *Charles's* sentence before me, I find not a word of his conscience. A man's conscience lies without the reach of human laws. Pray, Mr Dreamer, what could his Majesty's subjects do with his conscience; do you imagine they beheaded it with his body? You confess yourself, last page, to be the unfittest man in the world to pass judgment on the Replier's similes, you should have been better qualified before you had so exposed your own weakness in drawing any.

IN that dull parenthesis immediately before this memorable account of King *Charles*, he says, a man and his conscience cannot be parted: But here he puts a special difference betwixt the King and his conscience, telling us in *Italics*, lest we should not observe it, that *him*, and *his conscience both* were called to an account for his depredations. Unhappy Dreamer, thus to contradict yourself so expressly in the same paragraph!

BUT as there are some very severe things confidently asserted concerning thee that dissented from the Replier's congregation; I cannot help correcting a little, the Dreamer's mistake. He calls the Free Enquirer an anonymous libeler, and unknown buffoon; this would have been more to the purpose, had he not appeared in such disguise himself: But I think the author of the letter will be as readily known by the name of a Free Enquirer, as the Dreamer will by his titles Quaker, and Benjamin Broadbrim. Besides, the Free Enquirer said nothing inconsistent with the character he took; but this Dreamer is so unhappy as to say nothing consistent with the principles of a Quaker. As for the term Buffoon, (or Merry-

Andrew)

Andrew) if his performance has not merited him this title, it is none of his fault, for his nonsense, witless criticisms, and contradictions; together with his blending things sacred, civil, and profane, cannot miss to be ground of contempt among the serious, and matter of sport with *Deists* and profligates.

BUT to come to the charge against these men, page 11th, he says, "They swerved from it (*viz.* the Replier's society) in the "most fundamental doctrines of christianity." But does not tell what they were till page 14th, where he says the "congregation agreed to the sense of Scripture as in the words of the Confession of Faith;" he should have added the Act and Testimony, and Doctrine of Grace, which are standards as well as the other. But "a few men took it into their heads to differ from the congregation."—How knows he but it was in their hearts also? This is the same as the Replier's saying it was to *please themselves*. Who judgeth now, Mr Dreamer? But "they differed from their former selves."—There is no dishonour in changing *sentiments* (which I suppose he means by *selves*) if it be for better: But take his word for it, 'tis far otherways; why, 'tis from the received sense of Scripture he means, to be sure, as it is in the above standards, which he says "respects the *original basis* of christianity." This intimates there are others; but if he keeps to the sense as in the Confession of Faith, we have a notable discovery, *viz.* That christianity commenced when the Assembly summed up the sense of Scripture in their Confession! I have heard of christianity as old as the creation; but never that it was no older than since 1648.

BUT let us come to the charge, What do the men assert? Hear his own words, they "assert things which appeared to thee; thy session and congregation, to remove all the *revealed grounds* of "the personal distinction among the three persons of the GOD-HEAD, to overturn the eternal generation of the Son, and to invalidate the Mediator's right of redemption." An awful charge indeed! But they may comfort themselves a little, that they only "appeared to be so to the Replier and his session," who are not infallible judges of other men's faith. The parts of this charge are, first, they "remove all the *revealed grounds* of the personal distinctions among the three persons of the GOD-HEAD." I am at no small strait to know what he means by *revealed grounds*. If by grounds he means the fundamental causes or reasons of this personal distinction, it is more than stupid to express himself so; for there are no such thing revealed, nor can all the divines that exist shew from revelation the causes or reasons of this distinction. GOD never did, and perhaps never will, reveal the cause of his being three persons in one GOD-HEAD. If this be what he intends by the word grounds here, it has no meaning but a blasphemous one; to suppose any cause of the being of GOD, is to suppose him no GOD. And

And as the persons in JEHOVAH are as natural and necessary in their existence as the being of God, they must be absolutely beyond all cause.

BUT I would favourably judge, that by grounds here he means these principles upon which we found our faith of the personal distinction, which are only revealed in the word of God. Why then does he call them so emphatically *revealed* grounds, as if there were *unrevealed* grounds for our faith in this point? And why does he say these persons removed these revealed grounds? Will the Replier, or any of his session and congregation, say that they refused any thing revealed concerning the Trinity? No. Here is the ground of the dispute, they constantly affirmed that revelation alone was the foundation of all we could know or should believe concerning God. Had he said they were for removing some human inventions concerning that mystery, it would have been truth: But that they believe a distinction of persons in the GOD-HEAD any one may be fully satisfied by looking into the first Dissertation of a work entitled, *a View of the Trinity in the Glass of Divine Revelation*. So that this part of the charge is visionary, and a gross slander.

THE second is, they "took it into their heads to overturn the "eternal generation of the Son." If the phrase *revealed grounds* be connected with this, it would have been a special favour had he intimated the place in revelation where this doctrine is taught. But as I never could find it, the Dreamer will excuse me if I say, that its appearing true to the Replier and his session is not sufficient ground of my faith: For as he grants, every man hath undoubtedly a right to judge of the meaning of Scripture for himself.

BUT thirdly, they "took it into their heads to invalidate the "Mediator's right of redemption." He adduces nothing for proof, but asserts strongly. I suppose he dreamed this with the Replier's letter before him, where 'tis said these men were a-kin to *Socinians*; the one asserts without proof, and the other follows; but this is no reason why any of them should be believed, when asserting things that never entered either into the heads or hearts of these they are so traducing. But the hand of the Replier is visible in every part of this charge, only a change of words. The supposed denial of a distinction of persons, is the same with the Replier's *Sabellianism*: To deny eternal generation makes an *Arian* with him: And having supposed them a-kin to *Socinians*, it was easy to infer they denied the Mediator's right of redemption. But the next time any of these gentlemen writes, they will please to lay aside bare assertions, and take to proving these men guilty from the word of God, not from what they are pleased to impute to them.

BUT the Dreamer having got into the way of telling falsehoods, he gives us a bundle of them together. "When these men were "required by thee and thy session, with the concurrence of thy so-

"ciety,

ciety, either to shew that their new tenets were more agreeable to the tenor of Scripture than those which they opposed, or else return from that opposition; they could not do the first, nor would they do the last." I cannot but observe how nearly related the Replier and Dreamer are as historians, none of them scruples at turning matters of fact into the contrary, when it will best suit them in that dress. The Dreamer could not have told any thing more contrary to truth than this; for these men at the session, May 22, 1766, often proposed to shew that their principles were agreeable to Scripture; and requested the session to prove what they read of the Confession from Scripture. The Free Enquirer hath told the answer they got, viz. "That they had no time to read any proofs." This the Replier hath not thought fit to deny: Why then should the very fault of the session be imputed to them? These men might have been set at liberty had they not appealed to Scripture for determination of the matter in dispute. But this is vindicated against the Replier above.

THE Dreamer imagines he hath set all things in order, and confidently puts the question, "Where is there, in all this, the least foundation for the charge of imposition." I shall briefly tell you, Mr Dreamer: It was in the session insisting on these men renouncing their opinions, without giving them leave to shew what evidence they had from scripture to support them:—And imposing the terms of a human composition upon them, refusing to prove the terms to be agreeable to scripture. And then denying these persons communion for not renouncing the one, and embracing the other, without scripture evidence. And your own imposition is no less conspicuous, in imposing upon the world a scheme of these men's principles they never held.—In transmitting the very fault of the session upon them, and from thence concluding it was right in the session to exclude them. But it shews you had little to accuse them of, when their guilt must be inferred from other people's faults.

I SHALL not further detain the reader with the weakness of his reasoning against Mr M—y, or them that differed from the Replier; as the controversy in his remaining pages is not so much betwixt him and them, as betwixt *revelation* and *human systems*. And here the Dreamer will excuse me in changing my address to those, who, *Berean* like, search the scriptures to see if these things are so. Such cannot but observe what a preference this author gives the latter, to the prejudice of the authority, honour, and use of the former, by his weak endeavours to prove that they are "the only credible profession of christianity, the only preservative against error, the rule to conduct social worship and spiritual harmony," and

" and which christian churches ought in duty, and may with safety, rest satisfied with."

I HOPE you will agree with me, that the scriptures were calculated by GOD for these noble ends. This he refuses, by maintaining that every society may and ought to compose a confession, or agree to one already composed by others to answer all these purposes, by which that society, and every member thereof, is to be directed in matters of faith and worship. At what bar shall we try this controversy? We would incline the scriptures should be judge. But he no doubt will then think the favourite system of his society dishonoured. Here I shall not differ with him; but shall admit the system he pleads for, and his own sentiments too into the evidence. Only with his leave, I must be allowed to make revelation the leading evidence in its own favour.

HENCE it is said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* Here the scriptures are made the unalterable standard of whatever is said concerning GOD or our duty: The least variation from them is an evidence of darkness. Only that which is taught in scripture can be sure, edifying, and profitable to make us wise unto salvation; and lead to eternal life. Thus our Saviour answered the lawyer.—"What is written in the law, how readest thou?†" And thus *Paul* to *Timothy*,—"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."‡ Ignorance of the scriptures is the road to error, as our LORD saith,—"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures."§ But let us hear how comprehensively the Apostle *Paul* sums up the authority and use of the scriptures. "All scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."§ Do we chuse an unerring guide? Here is one indited by Divine inspiration. Do we want rules sufficient to constitute a credible profession of christianity? The scriptures are profitable for doctrine and instruction. Are social worship and spiritual harmony christian duties? This Divine system thoroughly furnishes the man of GOD for these good works. Are any in error? This word of GOD is for reproof and correction. Is it a duty to be guarded against error, and defend the truth? On this sacred ground we may safely stand, and be completely furnished for this, and all other good works. Is it the church's duty to cut off errors? Lo, here is the "sword of the spirit, which is the word of GOD."*

As it is impossible to collect all the evident testimonies JEHOVAH gives in favour of his word, let it suffice, to hear its character

* *Isa.* viii. 20. † *Luke* x. 25, 26. ‡ *2 Tim.* iii. 15. § *Matth.* xxii. 29. § *2 Tim.* iii. 16, 17. * *Eph.* vi. 17.

ter from the seraphic *Psalmist*. "The law (or as in the margin, the doctrine) of the LORD is perfect, converting, or restoring the soul: The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold. Yea than much fine gold (*or all human systems*): Sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: And in keeping of them, there is great reward, &c."† Can any such characters be given to the best composed system on earth besides the scriptures? May not the wit of men and devils be challenged to produce a single instance, wherein the scriptures are defective for answering all the purposes GOD hath revealed, as to the duty, interest, or privileges of the church, and every individual member of the body of CHRIST in their militant state. And to shew where GOD hath given the least hint that his mind was to be known any other way: Or, that any other rule was necessary for trying doctrines, and guarding his people from errors.

BUT let us hear what the *Westminster* Confession saith, which by this author is so grossly abused in his setting it up to rival the scriptures. "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon GOD (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of GOD.—The whole council of GOD concerning all things necessary for his glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: Unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.—All scriptures are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: Yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them. The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture, is scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly. The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined; and in whose sentence we are to rest; can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the scripture."‡

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† *Psal.* xix. 7, 8, 10, 11. ‡ *Chap.* i. *Par.* 4, 6, 7, 9, 10.

MUCH more to the same purpose might be cited from the *Westminster Conf.* But let us hear what this author says himself, P. 8.

“Is not the word of God itself the *infallible rule* of all religious sentiments; and, at the same time, the infallible and catholic INTERPRETER of its own meaning (*Isa. viii. 20.*) among rational and moral agents? Is not the word of God sufficiently determinate in its meaning; else, where is the perspicuity of the scriptures? Yea, where is there any revelation at all? An *unrevealed revelation* is a contradiction.—The word of God hath sufficiently determined its own sense; and the Almighty author thereof hath bound every man’s conscience to submit unto that meaning, without bringing his own sense unto it. God hath not mocked us with an indeterminate or unrevealed revelation.”

Now, when the Spirit of God, the *Westminster Assembly*, and even the author himself, hath given their verdict so explicitly in favour of the scriptures; who could have imagined he would have spent so many pages, endeavouring to prove that the Confession of Faith, not the scriptures, is the *only credible profession of christianity*? Which is in the plainest terms to say, that it is not he that professeth christianity as taught in the scripture, but he that professeth it as taught in the Confession of Faith, that is the christian. And that christianity is better taught in the latter, than in the former. His words will bear no other meaning, or I should be glad to give it. To profess christianity, is to profess the truths or doctrines of CHRIST laid down in his word. The word *credible* signifies that which is worthy of credit, assent, or belief. The word *only* taken as an adjective, signifies *this above all other*: As an adverb it signifies, *singly*, or *this and no other*. So that the natural construction of his words is, that the Confession of Faith is that book and *no other*, that contains the doctrines of christianity. It *only* is worthy to be believed and credited. It *only* can preserve from error: And it *only* the churches *may*, and *ought* to rest satisfied with, as the *only form of sound words, and rule*, to conduct them in worship and spiritual harmony.

Now, could we be so infidel as to credit this author, there is no further use for the Bible; seeing this system is *only* fit to answer all the purposes that concern christians; which it seems foolish men have dreamed the scriptures were *only* sufficient for. But let me tell this author, that in thus exalting any system under heaven, tho’ the whole fund of wisdom that men and angels are endued with was included in it, into the place of the sacred word of God, is *only* blasphemous; and tends to divert unthinking men from a due attention unto, and regard for the oracles of the living God!

I AM not here condemning the Confession of Faith and other

useful

useful systems, which may tend to elucidate the meaning of scripture, and have no doubt been blessed by God as means of instruction concerning the knowledge of his will revealed in his word: But disapproving the conduct of men who set them up as competitors for prerogative with the Divine word, from which they ought all to be framed, and kept in due subordination thereto: Since the difference must always remain so great, as betwixt the unerring dictates of the infinitely wise JEHOVAH, and the words of finite, frail, and worm man.

THIS I desire the reader to keep always in view.—If the doctrines of christianity be simple, plain, and easy to be understood, which the author grants: Whether does it most honour God, to hold forth the easy and plain words of his son JESUS CHRIST and his apostles, as the *only credible* profession of christianity, test of orthodoxy, and term of communion, which are sure, unerring, and cannot deceive? Or, to hold forth for these purposes the manufactured explications of men, who are not only liable to error, but are constantly divided in their opinions concerning the sense of scripture; and many of them destroying in one period of their lives, what themselves have laboured hard to build up in another. I say, whether are the words of CHRIST himself, or those of fallible men most worthy of credit and belief? Can any be at a loss to know whether the words of GOD or men merit our assent?

SHOULD it be said, by clothing the doctrines of revelation in words of man's devising, they become more familiar to the unlearned. But is it not granted that the scriptures are so plain, that even the unlearned through a due use of the means may attain the knowledge of all that is necessary to salvation?† Besides, this is a gross reflection upon the wisdom of GOD in inditing the scriptures, and imposing them as a rule of faith and practice, while they needed the assistance of the creatures who were to be ruled by them, to render them intelligible. It reflects on the goodness of GOD, to command conformity to a rule on the peril of damnation which was not in itself so plain as to be understood. It strongly insinuates, that christianity was never properly professed or understood till the *Westminster* Confession was compiled; and that such as had no other means than the Bible to teach them christianity, could not know or profess it aright. Certainly then, such as are called christians in the New Testament did not deserve the name, seeing in their time, not only the canon of scripture was incomplete, but they wanted that which *only* can be a credible profession of christianity, viz. systems composed by particular societies.

SHOULD it be said, every society must agree in what they judge the sense of scripture, to be a rule for admission of members, and ground of censuring delinquents. I grant that as every man, so every

† Chap. i. par. 7. Conf. Faith.

every society have a right to judge for themselves what is the sense of scripture: But this no way infers that their sense of scripture is the only credible test of christianity, and the only term of communion in the church of CHRIST. This determination is either *necessary* to the church's edification, or it is not. If it is not, then there is no need to lay such weight upon it. But if it be necessary, then either the scriptures have provided for it, or they are not a perfect rule, and sufficient for all things *necessary* to the edification of the church.

IF this society supposed be a part of the church of CHRIST, it certainly ought to have no other terms of admission than CHRIST hath made, could terms of CHRIST's making be reckoned *credible*. And I would be glad to know, what scripture authority can be produced for any society so far to new model the government of CHRIST's church, as to suit times, places, and circumstances, which power this author says every society hath. Are the institutions of CHRIST the lawgiver so defective as they need to be supplied? Or are they so intricate as not to be understood? If the first, then CHRIST has not been faithful in all things over his own house, and it must be false, that the *scriptures are sufficient to make us wise unto salvation, and furnish thoroughly for every good work*. If the last, then there could be no christian church without other directories than the scriptures; and so the faith of the church depends not upon the word of GOD, but upon the sense every particular society is pleased to affix to it, which may be right, but cannot unerringly be so, without supposing infallibility in that society.

BUT I would rather think such a society did not belong to the church which hath one head or lawgiver, and one law; but it seems this society may and ought to make laws for itself, to entitle to, and exclude from, the privileges thereof: Therefore, when it casts out a member, it is but mocking of CHRIST to do it in his name, they ought to do it in the name of the society whose laws the person hath offended against. Tho' we read in scripture of the Royal law, the law of CHRIST, and the law of liberty, yet we do not read of any particular laws made by particular societies for their own government. No, they all continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine, which it seems is not so sufficient now; times, places, and circumstances being changed, the doctrines of the gospel must be dressed in another form, before they can be the *only credible profession of christianity*.

THE person who receives this sense of scripture, thus framed, and held out by the society, either sees it to be authorized by GOD from his word, or he does not. If the first, what does it add to his faith, that this society or all the sons of Adam should say it is the true sense, when he only receives it upon the evidence the scriptures afford of their own sense? It may add to his comfort that

that many embrace it ; but his faith would be the same tho' none entertained that sense ; as it is not the wisdom of man, but the authority of God that is the foundation of his faith. But if he does not see evidence in scripture for that sense, and yet receives it, his faith is but human, not divine ; seeing it is only the authority of the society that is the foundation thereof ; for tho' it may be the true sense, yet as he receives it not upon Divine authority and evidence, it cannot be to him a Divine faith. Both the society, in imposing it as the only sense of scripture, because they judge so, and the person who receives it upon such grounds, plainly refuse that the word of God is the only and infallible interpreter of its own meaning, and the rule of religious sentiments. For if it hath sufficiently determined its own sense, why should not every one apply directly unto it for that purpose ?—Should it be plead that it is to prevent heresies : This argues that the scriptures are not sufficiently provided for that end ; But as was hinted, if this be a *good work, they furnish thoroughly for it.* And the apostle *Paul* lets *Titus* know, that the way to convince gainsayers, was, to “ *hold fast the faithful word, as he had been taught.*” †

WHAT can give greater advantage to the enemies of truth, than give them ground to think we suspect the sufficiency of the scriptures, by having recourse to human forms as tests of our faith ? Where the words of scripture are plain, there is no need for explications or tests of our understanding of, and adhering to them. And if in any thing the Spirit of God hath thought fit to leave it not so plain, it must be presumption in men to make their explications of such points a test of faith. To put doctrines necessary to salvation upon any other foundation than the scriptures, is to betray them into the hands of enemies ; and prejudice pious christians against the best compositions of men, when they find them thrust into the place of God's sacred word. The gracious design of God in committing revelation to writing by inspired men is, that we may have the knowledge of all things necessary to salvation in such words as were most fit to express them, and so most proper for us to keep to ; And that we might be delivered from the uncertainty of tradition, and from the attempts of enemies to draw us off from the true foundation, to build our faith upon human authority, and words of men's invention. We ought therefore, to regard the advice which *Eliphaz* gives, “ *Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.*” § The scriptures were indited by God, and given to men as the standing rule of their faith, and that upon the view of all the heresies which were to take place, by men's perverting the words, and corrupting or misconstruing the sense ; yet he hath provided no other rule or standard but his own word ; no where hinted that other systems should

† *Titus* i. 9. § *Job* xxii. 22.

should be composed to prevent errors. And must it not be strange then, to say men have no other way to testify that they do not wrong the scripture sense, than by adhering to a system of words not in the scriptures! If the scriptures have a determinate sense of their own, as this author grants, then they are every way sufficient as a test of faith, and no other is to be preferred to them: But if it be necessary that explications determine the sense for them, then they have not a determinate sense of their own, and their sufficiency is entirely given up.

It must be mighty obliging, to put an addenda to the rule of faith, and finish the work of God, as if imperfect; to fortify revelation with bulwarks, without which it could not be saved from error! It must be a prodigious favour done the church, to provide her with means to catch these foxes that spoil her vines; to secure her from, or enable her to destroy these enemies to truth, her peace and safety, yea, secure a seed to the church in succeeding generations! "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you."† God hath said, "there must be heresies."‖ No, faith this society, we will agree upon the sense of scripture, fence it with church authority; and to make it impregnable against all enemies, it shall be fortified by civil laws, enforced by the highest penalties, which shall be executed on the guilty wretch that will not believe it to be the sense of scripture; yea, and swear too never to think or speak otherways: But he who is capable of such insolence as to refuse his assent, or speak unbecomingly of this system, shall see the demerit of his crime in the confiscation of his effects, the imprisonment of himself, and may be thankful a gibbet does not finish him with his heresy. This is a part of the plan for preventing heresy! But where have we in the word of God either precept or example of forcing men into religion, and employing the arm of the magistrate to punish such as will not comply? What have we from CHRIST or his apostles to favour the modelling the church so much after the fashion of the kingdoms of this world? The apostle saith, "The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. The servant of the LORD must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, or forbearing, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."*

It is needless to say, that this compulsive method is not intended here by preventing of heresies. What is then intended? This was the method taken to crush heresy when the civil power favoured the system

system plead for; and if this is not used, how shall it answer the end? If every one is left to his own choice, what influence can the sense so agreed on, have to prevent error among those who are disposed to embrace it?

It is agreed that the true sense of scripture is but one; yet almost every society hath a different sense; and as they cannot all be the true sense, what is the best method a person should take who is for finding the true sense? To consult the parties, each accounts their own the only one. To compare them, is an endless task; besides the danger of being prejudiced thro' the superior talents of the compilers, who have used their whole art to undo all others, and render their own most acceptable. Would it not then be safest to search the scriptures, and chuse his religion upon their own evidence, and the authority of their Author, who has suited the revelation of His will to the capacities of his creatures that are moral agents: And take just so much of human systems, as he found agreeable to this unerring rule?

Does not binding the members of a society to that particular sense of scripture they have once agreed upon, limit the Spirit of God in his teachings; and discourage the industry of christians in searching after spiritual knowledge? For whatever any person may be privileged with through the blessing of God upon his searching the scriptures, tho' persuaded of the perspicuity of the evidence, yet, if it be not agreeable to the sense already admitted by the society, he must neither believe nor profess it: For the full sense is settled, the matter of his faith is limited, so his enquiries are needless, and wherein he believes more, or otherways, he is a heretic. He has all in the system needful; to learn more is dangerous.

But the society hath a right to judge of the sense of scripture for themselves. This is granted. But has not every individual the same right after using diligent and conscientious enquiries? The author grants this, but will not allow the professing the words of scripture to be a credible profession.—Let me ask, if the lovers of the scripture can imagine, how the sense of scripture is to be conveyed in human systems without words? If it cannot, as must be granted, how then comes it to pass that the sense as contained in words of men's devising is so profitable, which it cannot be in the words that God hath chosen? The HOLY GHOST hath held forth the sense in words calculated by his infinite wisdom and goodness. Men put the sense in other words, and call that the *only credible* profession of truth. Why? The author says, the words of God may be taken without the sense; true, but may not the words of men be taken without the sense also? None can suppose but the words of men are more liable to misconstruction and different interpretations than the words of God; and certainly every one will think himself more at liberty, to impose his own sense upon the words of men

men than those of the HOLY GHOST. Can it be supposed, that every individual among the thousands who have founded their profession upon systems, is thoroughly acquainted with the sense the compilers held forth or intended by these words? Nay, how can it be, when they seldom and perhaps never read them? Yet a professed adherence to them constitutes such a profession of christianity, as the greatest knowledge in, and conformity to the scriptures are incapable of!

Is not this a direct attack upon the perfection of revelation, yea, on the perfections of GOD himself? 'Tis plainly saying, JEHOVAH is not so capable to teach his creatures as they are to teach one another: A discrediting his authority in the intelligence he hath given in his sacred word: A setting up human systems to rival revelation. For that must certainly be the most preferable which is most capable to teach us the mind of GOD in the scriptures; this they are not sufficient for in themselves, because the words and sense may be parted; this human systems are capable of, for in them the sense is fixed; therefore they should be called the *Divine Books*, since they have a perfection which the word of GOD is not endued with! What advantage hath the scriptures in having GOD for their author, when compositions of men are more to the purpose?

IT is strange these men do not say that CHRIST shall judge the world by such systems! One would think it naturally follows, that what is the only test and standard of his faith and profession here, would be that by which he shall be judged. "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*"* I know not whether to call such doctrine *Deism* or *Atheism*. If GOD has not displayed his Divine perfections in his word, he has no where done it; for *he hath magnified his word above all his name.*† If we cannot depend upon the scriptures themselves, we are yet without any certain guide of GOD's giving: And for human systems, the most perfect of them are every period changing; so in fact we have no sure rule of religion at all.—Amazing!

IF heretics will make a bad use of revelation, who can help it? But as *Solomon* understood the true mother by her tenderness towards the child, so the true children of the church, are best known by their tender regard for the scriptures, and practical conformity to them. Such are not for dividing the authority of scripture betwixt GOD and men; giving GOD the honour of speaking to the church; and men the honour of fixing the meaning of JEHOVAH's words for the church. This cannot in any respect agree with the scriptures having in themselves a determinate sense: And that they sufficiently explain their own meaning, which is granted even by this author.

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* Gen. xviii. 25. † Psal. cxxxviii. 2.

BUT perhaps this may be thought to militate against the office of ministers preaching the gospel, and explaining the scriptures: A discouragement to people to attend the preaching of the word; and a rejecting scripture consequences. Though this is none of the Dreamer's objections, nothing of his bears so much the face of an argument, yet it may occur to others.

I SHALL therefore observe, that none of these can follow from keeping the word of God, and the works of men in their proper places. For tho' it be the duty of ministers to bring forth the truths revealed in scripture, and by all means discover the sense, and elucidate the same with all the perspicuity they are capable of, and endeavour by all the arguments in their power to convince the people that such is the true sense: Yet the consequences they draw, however clear to themselves, are not the standard of the people's faith; much less is their seeing them to be just consequences, a sufficient reason for any to receive them with equal credit as express revelation. The limiting the sense of scripture by a society as a test of orthodoxy, plainly lays a restraint upon ministers that belong to it; for then they must preach nothing as the sense of scripture, however clear it appears to them, but what is agreeable to that sense already fixed. Being thus confined, they must either crush what fresh discoveries they obtain from scripture; or in bringing them forth, be declared heretics for deviating from the received faith of the society.

IT is also the duty of every christian to use all the helps he can, as serious reading, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, earnest prayer to God for direction by his spirit in searching the scriptures, and using other means that he may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST." That he may "be nourished in the words of faith, and of good doctrine." That his "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment." That he "may approve things that are excellent." And that he may have his "spiritual senses exercised to discern both good and evil."† But whether the christian using his liberty of searching the scriptures, and receiving the truth from its own evidence, and the authority of God; Or, his taking all things as settled by the society he happens to be connected with, and submitting his judgment thereto, without further enquiry; be the method to attain these noble ends, let every impartial person judge.

As to scripture consequences, there are two kinds of persons I think they are binding upon. First, Such as see them to be necessarily connected with scripture; to such they are the sense of scripture, and nothing can excuse such persons from an obligation to believe them. They are also obligatory on such as have had sufficient means to see and

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† 2 Pet. iii. 18. & Tim. iv. 6. Phil. i. 9, 10. Heb. v. 14.

and know this connexion, but have either thro' carelessness, or obstinacy, neglected the use of these means. For none can be innocent who have the means of attaining knowledge, and yet continue ignorant.—But such a person as useth all the means in his power conscientiously, yet cannot see consequences drawn by a course of reasoning from scripture to be necessarily connected with revelation; I cannot think such consequences are obligatory upon him.

I APPREHEND nothing of any seeming strength can be brought against this, except what follows: That if a person be not bound to believe scripture consequences, because he does not see them; it follows, if a person does not see evidence for Divine revelation, it will discharge his obligation to believe the scriptures themselves.

THIS objection certainly includes a conscientious enquiry by the person supposed, or it is merely specious: For he that sinfully indulges a neglect of searching the scriptures, cannot be expected to know either the one or the other, as the scriptures carry their own evidence. But when the person does make diligent and impartial enquiries, there may be many consequences he cannot come to the knowledge of: But 'tis more than probable, that an instance cannot happen in the other case. As the scriptures are so full, and every way so well accommodated by Divine wisdom to all capacities, and containing such indisputable attestations to the truth of the gospel, if the person's enquiries were fair and conscientious, he could not reject the evidence revelation contains in favour of itself. So that the one case does not follow necessarily upon the other.

BUT if a person must be cast out of church communion for not seeing some consequences that are evident to others, and yet is using all the means in his power to understand the mind of God in scripture, and in other respects appears conscientious: It must be either because something more than a credible profession of christianity is necessary to church communion; or because he is not a credible professor of christianity. The first, even this author does not pretend to affirm; but the last is what he so faintly has attempted to prove: But then one of these three things must follow, either they who refuse him communion, must put themselves in place of God, and assume the prerogative to judge of the man's sincerity: Or, that there is more required to make a christian, than is expressly declared in scripture: Or, the doctrine of the scripture being a perfect rule, must be disclaimed. All which are glaring and manifest errors.

THOUGH these consequences were as certain in themselves as mathematical deductions; yet, the abstruseness which attends the reasonings to weak capacities, intimates that consequences which require a course of reasoning to deduce them, were not designed by God to be of equal necessity to all with the plain and easy truths which are clear to the meanest. Besides, the reasoning of fallible

men,

men, being mixed in such deductions with the declarations of God, must in some measure weaken the force of them in comparison with the primary truths they are deduced from.

THOUGH the sense of scripture in such a consequence be manifest to us, and so necessarily depending on scripture in our judgment, as to be believed by us, with the principles from which it is deduced: Yet as it is not so to others (who are as diligent in their enquiries as we can pretend to be) they cannot believe it. Nor can it be esteemed as strictly a part of revelation to christians in general, as the words of scripture are. The importance of consequences ought to be measured by the plainness and easiness of their deduction from revelation, for it is a perfection of it to be universally useful, being designed for the benefit of mankind. But it must militate against this perfection of revelation, to say there is any truth necessary to salvation not expressly taught in it; or not so clearly deducible as to be manifest to every honest mind. The scriptures were not intended for the learned only; what was hid from them with all their reasoning, was revealed to the unlearned, as fit to make them wise to salvation. The great end of revelation is to lay before men things necessary to salvation in the plainest and most easy way of conveyance, supported by the argument of Divine authority; so that the unlearned may believe, and practise what is necessary to salvation, upon the authority of a **THUS SAITH THE LORD, or IT IS WRITTEN**; and not because such men or an Assembly agreed that this or the other was the sense of scripture, and ordained it as a test of orthodoxy, and the only credible profession of christianity.

I PRESUME the unprejudiced reader will see how weak the reasoning of this dreaming author is, and how little truth there is in the minor of his long-winded syllogism, which I have proved false: Hence the whole must be visionary and come to nought; with all other such attempts to bring the word of God into disrepute, which is the scope of this author's last pages, in which are not obscurely intimated, that the scriptures are obscure and unintelligible, till the sense be drawn out and summed up by men; that they do not sufficiently confute error, nor guard against it; that they do not clearly prove the truth, and therefore not a credible profession of christianity, &c. All which qualifications the *Westminster* Confession is endued with. This is the amount of these laboured pages, and if it is not *Deism*, I confess, I know not what *Deism* is.

I SHALL oppose this author's syllogism with another; and leave the christian reader to chuse which he thinks most agreeable to scripture.

WHAT was a credible profession, and distinguished between truth and error in the days of the apostles and first christians, must be so still; but adhering to the words of the HOLY GHOST were judged credible,

credible, and fit to distinguish between truth and error then : *Ergo*, they are fit for that purpose still.—The denying the major, will say the apostles did not make a credible profession of religion. The minor is evident from the admission of members into the church thro' the whole New Testament. Again, The words of scripture have sufficient evidence in themselves to make them a credible profession of christian religion ;

HE who adheres to them, makes a credible profession of christian religion. The first is true, so is the latter. To deny the antecedent, is to refuse the credibility of the scriptures. To reject the consequence, is uncharitably to judge the heart of the professor. And “ who art thou that judgeth another man's servant ? To his own master he standeth or falleth.”† But further,

WHATEVER is not authorized from precept or example, by CHRIST and his apostles, as the right of christian societies, is none of their christian privileges : But for a society to fix the sense of scripture, and set their sense of it up as a test and standard of orthodoxy to other christians, cannot be proved from the New Testament : Therefore it is not now the privilege of any christian society. To refuse the first proposition, lands in superstition and idol-worship. The second must hold, till precept or example from the New Testament is produced.

ONCE more : What was sufficient to guard against error in the times of christianity, must be so still ; but the word of GOD was then reckoned only sufficient : Therefore it must be so still. The first must be granted, or suppose that the care of CHRIST towards his church changes with times and circumstances ; and the means of his people's safety are uncertain and changeable. The second must hold, without accusing the scripture of insufficiency, and maintaining there are more duties and sins than the scripture hath told us of. Tho' heretics pretend to hold by the scriptures, and fix a false meaning to them, may they not do the same with every other system ? Or, is it because any number of men knows better how to guard their words against misinterpretations than the Spirit of GOD, that systems composed by them are preferable to the scriptures, to guard against error ? But enough of syllogisms.

THIS author hath been at great pains to discredit revelation, and now he comes to finish his laudible task. And supposing he had proved the *Westminster Confession* the *only credible* profession of christianity, he now makes his last effort for an *only* title to it also. He cannot endure it should be called human, and the Bible Divine. There is such majesty in what is Divine, and so wide a difference betwixt what is so, and things human, that it must be compromised. Either the Bible must be called human, or the other Divine. He therefore gives us a definition of human systems, which he presumes

none

none will apply to the Confession: But they must be much wiser than me that can find any sense in it: Tho' he says with an air of assurance, peculiar to himself, that the mind is bound up to it: But this I don't wonder at, for men that have a right to fix the sense of Divine revelation for others, have certainly a power of determining the meaning of human systems infallibly. The substance of the definition is, "Human systems are collections of heterogeneous materials; —" and owe their *all*, both as to matter and manner, unto the invention and sagacity of men." I can learn nothing from this description but that no system can be called human, which is not wholly made up of contradictory materials; and if any of the materials are Divine, it ceases to be human: So the citing a text will make a Divine system; in this sense the author's own performance, and that he animadverts upon, are both Divine. But let the author's meaning be what it will, his conclusion is in plain enough words, when he questions very much, "if the Confession can with any modesty, be called human in the sense of the description." So whatever this oracular definition means, it proves the Confession not to be human, consequently it must be divine. That I do not mistake his scope is plain, for he says before we can prove it to be such, (*viz.* human) we "must make it good that *none* of the words of the Confession are the truths of the Bible." But if any thing therein is not truth, I would think it has little claim to the character of a Divine system, and that it is not all acceptable even to seceders is plain, from the different senses in which they take faith, assurance, &c. from what the Assembly did.

HOWEVER, from this hypothesis we have a multitude of Divine books; the Bible is no longer the *only* Divine system; here is one special rival to it; and one which excludes it from being a credible profession of christianity. What a strange notion this author has of a Divine system! He confesses the words of the Confession are not Divine, but the sense. How shall he certify to us that all the words, as they stand there have a Divine sense? A Divine system must be as perfect in its words and sense, as it ought, or can be, suitable to all times, and agreeable to all circumstances possible, and which expresseth the mind of God perfectly to men. None of these can be said of the Confession. Is it perfect? No. Then an imperfect Divine system is a contradiction. Is it suitable to all times and circumstances? No. He says it must change as these change. But a changeable Divine system is also a contradiction. Does it express the whole mind of God perfectly? Or can nothing be found of God's revealed will to men, that is not in the Confession? Many things. Then it is a very improper rival to the Bible. I refer it to the consideration of the serious, if it does not savour of blasphemy, to call any book Divine but the Bible. How daring must it be thus to defame the contrivance of Infinite Wisdom!

Wisdom ! Could this author imagine (I do not say believe, for he certainly believes nothing of religion that makes more Divine books than the Bible) that the whole sense of revelation, and no more than the sense of it, is contained in the Confession ? This constitutes an infinite difference betwixt the scriptures and all other systems ; for this reason I call them human, because not Divinely complete : Not because men's judgments are taken up in methodizing them, but rather because men's judgments cannot fully comprehend the sense and meaning of scripture, and hold it forth to other's in their compositions : In this respect they are not perfect, therefore I call them human. But the word of GOD holds forth the full and perfect sense, which is beyond the capacity of the wisest generation of men since the creation, fully to know or understand. The scriptures were indited by the infallible direction of GOD inspiring the penmen, who spoke not their own mind, but as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST. None will say the Assembly was under the same inspiration when they collected the sense of scripture.

BUT I flatter myself that 'tis unnecessary to point out the difference to discerning men. Tho' our author is certainly dreaming when he says, "the truth is, if every system is human about which the understandings of uninspired men have been conversant, we have nothing besides human systems." Thus, reader, rather than not have his favourite system Divine, he will conclude all copies and versions of the Bible to be human. I do not say our version, considered as such, is Divine, but it is a translation of the Divine original very near literally corresponding with the text ; so near, that our greatest critics have found no difference that affects things necessary to salvation. And I cannot help thinking, that it was rather *exact copies or translations* that the apostle *Paul* points at, when he commands *Timothy* to hold fast the form of sound words, than the sense of scripture collected by societies into a Confession. For it must easily occur to the apostle, tho' he had not been Divinely inspired, that to the universal use of the scriptures in the churches, it was necessary to have them copied and translated ; without the christian world could have been always together, and of one language. And a translation of the scripture is an *express draught*, as our author defines this form of sound words ; but that no system can be called, which is composed in words of men's invention.

BUT if it be found that the word of GOD must be kept *pure and complete*, the whole of this author's scheme will fall at once. This I shall next endeavour to prove.

THE promise of CHRIST, that the HOLY GHOST should guide into all truth,* secures the word of GOD from being injured or adulterated. He hath promised to be even to the end of the world with those

* John xvi. 13.

those that teach and observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded. † Therefore the things which CHRIST hath commanded shall remain to the end of the world for the use of men. We are told by *Moses*, that “those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” † So that as long as it is the duty of men to keep the law of GOD, so long must the word of GOD be continued as he hath revealed it; which will be while there is a man upon earth. Nay, our blessed LORD hath told us, that “till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” §

HATH he said his words shall not pass away? Hence it is plain the word of GOD is more firm than heaven or earth; so that it is easier to pluck the sun from his orb, and toss the earth from its centre, than change any part of the word of GOD. For as the apostle *Peter* saith, “The word of the LORD endureth for ever,” and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” || But if it be corrupted it cannot be called the word of the LORD.

’TIS an imagination every way unworthy of GOD, to suppose that he would suffer his word to be corrupted. He who will not suffer a hair of our heads to perish without his permission; and takes care of the fowls of the air, and meanest reptiles of the earth, will he suffer the foundation of religion to be overthrown, of which his beloved Son JESUS CHRIST is the chief corner stone? Will he suffer the seals to be torn from his will and testament, the articles thereof changed, and the spiritual food of his people, the word of life, to be poisoned by the inventions of men? In short, is he willing to lose his word, and give up his claim thereto wholly? None but *Atheists* can imagine it. To suppose it in any respect corrupted, is to question the whole. If in any thing, why not in fundamentals? There is nothing in it but what became the wisdom of an infinite GOD to dictate, and as well becomes his honour and glory to preserve pure and entire. Tho’ all the legions of hell, and wicked on earth, should conspire to corrupt, add to, or diminish from this word of GOD, it would remain impossible while he continues a faithful GOD.

THE word of GOD is that appointed mean for bringing about the great purposes of JEHOVAH’s love in the converting, comforting, &c. of the chosen vessels of his mercy, and must in spite of all opposition be kept pure and complete, as the foundation of their faith, the rule of their conduct, and store-house of all their comfort. Could the saint be once persuaded that the word of GOD is corrupted, his faith must stagger, hopes languish, comforts sink, and his soul faint. For, saith CHRIST, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth

† *Matth.* xxviii. 20. † *Deut.* xxix. 19. § *Matth.* v. 18. || *1 Pet.* i. 25.

“mouth of God.”* What saith the Psalmist, “Thy word is
 55 very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it. This is my comfort
 56 in all my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. Mine eyes
 57 fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.”†
 We may therefore conclude with the great Dr *Owen*, “That the
 58 whole word of GOD in every letter and title, as given from him
 59 by inspiration, is preserved without corruption.”‡

BUT why should I detain the reader to prove that which none
 but *Deists* deny? And it is no small evidence of this author’s being
 too much inclined thereto, in his using the very arguments which
 they place their greatest confidence in against revelation: And
 goes so far, as not only to discard translations, but the originals
 themselves: Yea, the very autographs of the inspired penmen,
 which he says are human, “without we can prove that every one
 “who had a hand in transcribing, and reprinting the originals,
 “was inspired!” This is in plain language telling us, that the
 Divinity of the scriptures ceased with the apostles, when inspira-
 tion ceased, and christians in all ages since have been believing they
 know not what. As if the faithfulness of GOD were not sufficient
 ground of assurance, that whatever means were used, his word
 should remain pure; which is absolutely necessary, in agreeableness
 to the plan GOD had established, for bringing about the consum-
 mate felicity of his chosen. No matter who were employed as in-
 struments; it is the promise of an All-sufficient GOD that makes it
 sure to us, that none of his words shall be lost; but there can be
 no reasoning from the Almighty’s interposition in favour of his
 own word, to the composing a Confession.

AND tho’ we should not argue from the Divine care in this
 respect, yet there is no comparison betwixt *translating* and *explain-
 ing*, or *illustrating*. The former is only to find fit words in one
 language to answer the same words in the other language, and
 which bear the same idea: But to explain, is to impose a particu-
 lar sense or meaning upon the text according to the judgment of
 the author: In the one case the primary subject is not changed, it
 is still the same tho’ in another language, and this only can be cal-
 led the “*express draught of the wholesome doctrines of christianity*.”
 It neither changes its sense nor its author. But illustrations can-
 not be the same with the primary subject; and as to the sense, the
 most perfect comment is not only liable to, but hath imperfections
 in it: Besides it constitutes a new author. The translators cannot
 with propriety be called authors of the Bible; nor can comments
 claim GOD for their author; but if they were Divine they might.

THOUGH we have not the same scrolls and paper the prophets
 and apostles used, yet there are all the evidence and certainty the

* Matth. iv. 4. † Psa. cxix. 140.—50.—123. ‡ Pa. 14. of the Divine original of
 the scriptures.

case will admit of or requires, that we have the same words. And much more certainty than we can even have that the same words are transmitted to us, which *Adoniram Byfield* and other scribes wrote in the first copy of the Confession. There are many advantages in favour of the one case, that cannot be supposed in the other, or any one else.

THE scriptures carry their own pure evidence in themselves, which is plain, uniform, and simple in the greatest perfection. The convergent rays of scripture evidence coming into the soul, never fail to produce the same happy effects in the hearts and lives of thousands in every age, who are unacquainted with any confession. If other systems are profitable, it is from their agreeableness to this Divine one; they shine in borrowed robes. But the scriptures by their own internal light, worth, excellency, and Divine authority, bear the brightest and most convincing evidence in themselves, and clearly demonstrate what they are. Their innate beauty and superlative goodness powerfully persuades the mind to receive them, as in very deed they are the words of the Living God. They depend not upon men or any society for their authority, the faithfulness of God is engaged for them, and his Divine power never fails to make them effectual for the great purposes of salvation, which infinite wisdom provided them for. In this sacred volume is the majesty of God illustrious, the Sun of glory resplendent, and the word of the Divine Spirit infallible. To seek for more, or other evidence for the truth of the scriptures, than what is so conspicuous in themselves, is to set up a candle to behold the sun in his noon-day splendor.

COULD it be possible to destroy this work of God by corruption or otherwise, it would long ere now been extinguished by the united powers and policy of hell and earth. What plots and machinations have been formed against it? Yet all over-ruled by Divine wisdom, for the spreading its light and displaying its glory: "Wherein they dealt proudly, God was above them."* He hath made it "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."† More quick and powerful in its own defence than the two-edged swords of combined enemies, bringing them in subjection to it, at the expence of confessing their deeds, and consigning their magical books, the contrivance of hell, to the flames. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."‡—The word that bears the name of Jesus, which shall be continued to all generations in spite of all inventions from hell and earth, once to imagine it can be rendered of no effect by corruption or adulteration, is a thought equally false and ridiculous. Take away revelation, and there's an end of that common interest in

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which

* *Exod. xviii. 11.* † *2 Cor. x. 4. 5.* ‡ *Acts xix. 18, 19, 20.*

which all the people of God are united, and ever will be, so far as they are guided by religion. Gospel churches are framed by rules upon record in the book of God, which make them golden candlesticks, among which the Divine Redeemer delights to walk. §

THE disquisitions of reason and philosophy, with the ingenious conjectures of exalted talents, tho' boasting of flights beyond the stars, and excursions into the invisible world of spirits, have thro' the prevalency of custom, or fashion, been esteemed and flourished for a season; but at last gave way to others in their turn. They acquired to their authors the reputation of subtle wits, discoverers of truth, irrefragable reasoners; but how are heaps of these curious volumes forgotten? And tho' they have escaped the ruins of time, yet they are turned over with the same smile of pity, which a few years hence, will be the only regard reckoned due to the admired works which have succeeded them. Revolutions of time terminate the glory of human systems. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass: but the word of the LORD endureth for ever. And his truth endureth to all generations."*—No process of time can alter the nature of the everlasting gospel: The same Divine evidence in itself thro' all ages inviteth to embrace it. When *Deists* have spent their sophistical wit, and metaphysicians lost themselves in the maze of abstractions, revelation will continue the sure pledge of JEHOVAH's love, the pure foundation of faith, the unerring rule of pure religion, the christian's comfort in life and death, and the same "power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."†

WHAT was said concerning God's peculiar people, may with the utmost propriety be applied to his *sacred word*; "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel."‡

THIS author, Page 18th, wonders "how a doctrine is *Divine*, so long as it is *standing in the words of scripture unknown*, and *unthought of*; and becometh *human* as soon as it is conceived by the human understanding, and is expressed in any *other words* than those of scripture!" But who says that Divine words become human when conceived by the human understanding? Or that vitiated human minds can fully conceive the sense of them? This is an imagination to favour his own scheme. Divine words will be so, whatever the understanding conceives about them, or wherever they are put. But when men change the Divine words for others of their own, and call these the sense of scripture, which, tho' it may be, yet it is but imperfectly so, as men's understandings cannot comprehend the full sense, nor their words express it: And therefore may be justly called human. Does it not offer violence to the common sense of christians, to tell them, that the words contrived

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§ Rev. ii. 1. * 1 Pet. i. 25. Psal. c. 5. † Rom. i. 16. ‡ Numb. xxiii. 23.

by any man or assembly, which they chuse to express scripture truth in, are *Divine words*? Can they be called the *words of GOD* which are not in *his word*? If they are *Divine words*, why is not the Confession called the *word of God*? It may be called the words of divines; but no more of it are *Divine words*, than what are taken from revelation in *express words*.

BUT here I must wonder in my turn, and I think every lover of GOD's word will join with me. However it entered into the mind of any christian, (if this author be one) that the Divine doctrines contained in the words of scripture as GOD hath expressed them, must continue *unknown* and *unthought of*, till their sense be collected by men, and written in a Confession of Faith!—Surprising! This is at once rendering the Bible useless in itself, till manufactured by men. What a miserable condition must they have been in, who never saw the sense of scripture thus collected, without which the scriptures are *unknown* and *unthought of*! What a pity it is that the author should have spoke so much truth in his 8th Page, whereby he is so manifestly contradicted! What has now become of the perspicuity of the scriptures? How consistent with this is it to say, "The Bible is the catholic interpreter of itself, and sufficiently determines its own meaning? Yea, where is there any revelation at all? For an unrevealed revelation is a contradiction." But may I not venture to ease this author's wondering mind, by informing him why doctrines as they stand in the scriptures are so little thought of? It is because other systems composed by men, are set up and countenanced by church authority, as tests of doctrine, standards of orthodoxy, rules for admitting into, and excluding from church communion; yea, made the *only* credible profession of christianity, preservative from error, and that which churches may, and ought to acquiesce in, and rest satisfied with, as the form of sound words, to conduct them in social worship with harmony. This is the reason why the Bible becomes of so little use, so much *unknown* and *unthought of*.

THOUGH I value the *Westminster Confession*, as one of the best summaries of doctrine extant, I must be excused from admitting it into the place of revelation, as to authority, purity, perfection, title, use, &c. and must be still allowed to call it a *Human System*: In which I think I am countenanced, not only by the Assembly themselves, but also the best writers that have either defended or explained it; which I think are Mr *Erskine* and others, who, yet in their preface to the catechism explained, expressly call it a *Human Composition*. But speaking of the scriptures, quest. 14, they say, their authority cannot depend upon the church, "because the true church of CHRIST depends, in its very being, on the scriptures; and therefore the scriptures cannot depend upon it, as to their authority, *Eph. ii. 22.*" And speaking of the incomparable excellency,

cellency, and usefulness of the scriptures, quest. 48, they say, "They
 " are the well-furnished dispensatory of all sovereign remedies; the
 " rich magazine of all true comfort; the complete armory of all
 " spiritual weapons; and the unerring compass to guide to the
 " haven of glory, *Psal.* cvii. 20. *Rom.* xv. 4. *Eph.* vi. 13,—18.
2 Pet. i. 19." These sentiments are clearly against the doctrine of
 this performance of the Dreamer, and must be a just reproof to
 both the author, and also the Replier as *imprimator*.

THESE who put the *Westminster* Confession in the place of the
 scriptures, do it such a service as the friends of Lady *Jane Gray* did
 to her, who, much against her own inclination, and those of her best
 friends, but to favour their ambitious views, mounted her on the
 throne of *England*, which soon became the means of taking off her
 head. So the substituting this or any human system in the room of
 the sacred word of GOD, is the most effectual way to destroy its re-
 putation among all the lovers of the scriptures. If *Reuben* must
 lose his birthright, if he goes up to his father's bed: Beautiful *Ab-*
solom be deemed a traitor when usurping the throne of his father:
 And the handmaid dismissed when she becomes rival to her mistress:
 Much more, whatever draws contempt upon the oracles of the Living
 GOD, must be expected to have its glory stained, by him who is a
 jealous GOD, and will not give his glory to another.

AND such as are for invading the prerogative of heaven, would
 do well to remember how the Divine Author of revelation hath
 fenced it against all such intrusions.—" If any man preach any o-
 " ther gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be ac-
 " cursed.* Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee,
 " and thou be found a liar.† Ye shall not add unto the word
 " which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.‡
 " For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the pro-
 " phecy of this book, if any shall add unto these things, GOD
 " shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
 " And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of
 " this prophecy, GOD shall take away his part out of the book of
 " life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are
 " written in this book. He who testifieth these things, saith,
 " surely I come quickly. AMEN. EVEN SO, COME LORD
 " JESUS."§

* *Gal.* i. 9. † *Prov.* xxx. 6. ‡ *Deut.* iv. 2. § *Rev.* xxii. 18, 19, 20.



A D D E N D A.

AS the Replier has confidently engaged not to reply again, tho' a *thousand such scurrilous letters* as the Free Enquirer's should be written; and the Quaker has followed his dictator, and told us, that such *senseless epistles* as Mr M—y's he will hold unworthy of his notice. Therefore, it may safely be concluded, whatever any of them replies to, will, in their own judgment, be neither *senseless* nor *scurrilous*. And if any thing I have done, get so far into their good graces, as to deserve their public notice, I may presume it will be the same as if they recommended it as a *sensible* performance; and which on that account, no doubt, will merit more regard from others. However, so many are the difficulties and contradictions that attend the human explications of the Trinity, that a fair resolution and reconciliation of them, upon a foundation that hath the authority of GOD, would, I own, be such a master-piece as I apprehend has no precedent. If this *mighty genius*, the Quaker, shall undertake this task, and acquit himself honourably, I shall no more account it strange that he thinks himself or others have a right to compose *Divine systems*; for nothing short of a new revelation can complete this discovery, as the volumes of revelation we are already blest with do not furnish us with any such accounts of that mystery, as the fertile inventions of men have annexed thereto. This would be an acquisition that might justly claim the regard of all, but especially these societies that have made these things terms of their communion; then they would know what better foundation they had to believe such things themselves, and impose them upon others, than the written word of GOD. This is intelligence extremely much wanted at this day, when the prerogative of societies, to make articles of faith, is so far extended, and the people taught it as their indispensable duty to submit to rules, framed by society, as the *only credible profession of christianity*.

I AM persuaded such adepts in demonstrating Divine mysteries, without the aid of revelation, will be at no loss for a clear resolution of all the difficulties that can occur. To such vast capacities as can with such ease demonstrate in what manner the three Divine persons subsist in one JEHOVAH—That the Divine Essence is communicated—That there are days in eternity, &c. &c. I say, to such, nothing can appear difficult. He must be wiser than mortals that can propose any thing, which such persons are not capable to investigate.

IF these eagle-eyed Theologists, that can see beyond the limits of revelation, give satisfactory accounts of what they pretend to be so well acquainted with, they may be certain the world will be *infidel enough* to give to their works that respect and reverence due to such *oracular discoveries*. Nay, such new information concerning
sacred

sacred mysteries, would even merit the attention of beings whose intellects are not encumbered with mortal bodies.

I SAID *infidel enough*, because, whoever pretend to teach more concerning the nature of GOD, than what he hath revealed in his word, they must be divested of christianity that will believe or regard them. All such attempts with this performance of the Quaker's (to borrow a favourite term of the Replier's) *tend* only to *deism* and *infidelity*. And if the Replier will employ an infidel amanuensis, and favour his excursions against christianity, by patronizing his deistical conceits, in publishing them to the world with comments, he cannot but expect to share with him in what he and his works only deserve, which at most is but satyr or contempt.

AFTER the Dreamer had said, Page 11th, that these men were "allowed to make the best of their belief in any society that should please to join with them in it:" How much to the purpose must it be for the Replier, from the pulpit, to continue his railing against them, and any society that should receive them? May we not wonder what he has now to do with them, or any they may be connected with: But it is most likely, he and the Quaker (if they are different persons) have both adopted that *Papish* maxim, *Throw calumny enough, some of it will stick*.

BUT 'tis time enough to pronounce our principles *Sabellianism*, when he proves them to be such; and to find fault with other societies, when he accounts some better for the conduct of his own, than he has done in his Reply. One would think that society acted more like christians, in receiving one of us into communion with them, upon an explicit declaration of his adherence to the principles of truth as contained in Divine revelation; than the Replier's society, in receiving another (whom they had supposed guilty of the same errors) upon a bare subscribing an article of a human composition. This still shews that human systems, with them, are preferable to the scriptures: And that errors, which they reckon gross blasphemy when the person goes from their society, turn pretty innocent trifles if he will but return to it again.



F I N I S.